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A KING'S ROMANCE

THE STORY OF MILAN AND NATALIE FIRST KING AND QUEEN OF SERVIA

BY

FRANCES GERARD

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"A GRAND DUCHESS AND HER COURT," ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS PORTRAITS
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PREFACE

SERVIA, as we see it on the map, is wedged between the territories belonging to Austria and Turkey. On the north it is separated from Austria by the Danube, or more properly speaking by its tributary river the Save. On the west the Drina divides it from Bosnia. On the north-east the Danube makes a partition between Servia and Walachia. Crowned by mountain peaks, covered with forests, Servia is an inclined plain ever sloping towards the Danube river. The forests and valleys, besides lending to the country itself a charm beyond the power of words to describe, form the principal sources of livelihood for the inhabitants, who, both by inclination and necessity, live mostly on the produce of the land. The men and women of Servia are not an active race. They are dreamy and romantic, loving to study the stars and to read the book which Nature offers to her best-loved children. Hence it is noticeable that, as a rule, the people, provided they can enjoy life in the

land of their birth, are content with little. They have not much ambition in their nature, and military glory does not attract them. The life of the shepherd who dreams away his days on the mountain peak has a distinct charm for such natures ; although this communing with nature itself in its largest and grandest sense is as a sealed book to the worldly earthworms whose only dreams are of money and what it brings. It is said, with what truth I cannot say, that those who watch through the night on the hills could tell us much of that unknown spirit world which holds for each one of us such a powerful and mysterious attraction. Goethe's "Walpurgis Night on the Brocken" is not the mere outcome of the poet's wild imagination ; it has been testified to by many of those who have watched at night and have seen spirit manifestations ; and we may believe that these have not been wanting in so romantic a country as Servia. I am afraid it will give a shock to my readers to hear that these romantic Servian shepherds prefer to keep and tend herds of swine rather than the more refined sheep. The vulgar pig, however, brings much larger prices.

As we descend the mountain heights and approach the Danube, the aspect of the country changes. The

forest trees vanish and fruit trees take their place, while in lieu of the far-stretching wildernesses of forest and woods, through which the storm winds hiss and howl, we have peaceful and delightful vineyards. Fruit abounds in Servia, the hillsides being covered with vines.

The Choumadia (the glory of whose forests has been so often extolled by travellers) is situated between Moravia and Kragujwaz. The chain of mountains known as the Rudnecker lies in the middle of the Choumadia, the country round about seeming to be drawn by some magnetic force to rise to the level of these mountain peaks.

Of the Rudnecker chain the Sturaz is the highest point, over-topping all others, and commanding an extensive view, which opens out like a panorama. On the south the blue tops of the Balkan Mountains can be seen ; on the west lie the Drina Mountains ; to the north we catch a view of the Zer ; and on a fine day with a good glass the plains which are watered by the Save are visible.

Servia had been too long under the heel of Turkey to escape its corrupt influence, and, although in 1878 it obtained its freedom, the taint of its long servitude even still lingers to the detriment of nobler instincts.

In Belgrade, especially, was this low standard to be found, the ancient nobility, the magnates of the land, and the wealthy merchants having been driven to leave their own country and settle in Hungary and Austria. The less wealthy and lower orders remained. These, through contact with the sinister practices of their masters, had imbibed a good deal of the corrupt habits of the Turks. The old simplicity of life had disappeared, a love of luxury was general, while the whole tone of society was debased. The immorality of the Turk was contagious, and the bonds of domestic life were broken without causing any social protest. The teaching in the schools and colleges did not do much to raise the standard ; rather, it inclined in the opposite direction.

Socially speaking, Servia is altogether a new country, its ancient aristocracy having disappeared ; for, as we have seen, on the first conquest by the Turks, the better families abandoned the sinking ship and settled in other and more fortunate countries. Hence Servia has to suffer from the great misfortune of an alien upper class which has no sympathy with the people of the land where both nationalities live side by side.

As a natural consequence of this propinquity, intermarriages between Turks and Servians have taken

place, and this mixture of national characteristics has not produced a beneficial result, the Servians having for one thing imbibed the love of money and the contempt for women which are two salient characteristics of the Mussulman.

"In Servia everything is for sale, the only difference being the price demanded. The minister asks more, the clerk less, the servant still less, but every man has his price. In Belgrade the moral standpoint is lower than elsewhere, and here women play a more undignified part."[1] The Servian woman, however, of every class is forced to be the servant, oftentimes the slave of her husband. He orders, she obeys. In the lowest orders of peasants she has to kiss his hand in token of subjection. This system, which is a species of slavery, has induced the usual demoralisation which follows tyranny. Where the woman has not her proper place the whole structure of family life goes to pieces ; and this result is to be found not alone in the middle and lower classes, where the subjection of the woman is more bodily than mental, but it also leavens the upper and leading circles of society, where divorce and separation are everyday matters and considered of no account, a fresh marriage being contracted

[1] *La Servie Contemporaine.*

and dissolved as easily as the first, for little or no reason.

Money, as already said, will get anything and everything in Servia. Persons of the highest rank and position are as greedy of gold as the most needy, and bribery is general among officials of all classes. Indeed, the people seem to have adopted the well-known Polish motto: "If the King sups well, why should the peasant starve?"

The Servians have no doubt learnt many evil ways while ground down by a foreign oppressor, and the stories which are told of the corrupt practices among them appear hardly credible. These sweeping accusations, however, probably contain much that is exaggerated. In any case, the best friends of Servia must hope that the near future has in store for her a higher and wider development of true civilisation.

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It may be noted that the principal street of Belgrade is sometimes referred to as Prince Michael Street, or St. Michael Street, but apparently it is more generally called Michael Street.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
MILAN, FIRST KING OF SERVIA (photogravure) . *Frontispiece*	
THE KONAK, BELGRADE	42
QUEEN NATALIE AT THE TIME OF HER MARRIAGE . . .	60
SALON IN THE KONAK	70
QUEEN NATALIE WITH HER ONLY CHILD, THE LATE KING ALEXANDER	86
MILAN, AS GENERAL-IN-CHIEF OF THE SERVIAN ARMY . .	102
THE HALL IN WHICH THE SKUPSHTINA IS HELD . . .	120
QUEEN NATALIE AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-EIGHT . . .	136
BALL-ROOM IN THE KONAK	144
QUEEN NATALIE, A PORTRAIT TAKEN DURING HER RESIDENCE IN FLORENCE	170
THE LATE KING ALEXANDER AS A BOY	190
QUEEN NATALIE AT THE AGE OF THIRTY	218
PRINCE MICHAEL STREET, BELGRADE, IN WHICH QUEEN NATALIE LIVED	226
THE LATEST PORTRAIT OF THE LATE KING ALEXANDER . .	286
THE LATE QUEEN DRAGA	296
THE LATEST PORTRAIT OF THE LATE QUEEN DRAGA . .	302
ST. MARK'S CHURCH, BELGRADE, THE BURIAL PLACE OF THE OBRENOVITCH FAMILY	306

A KING'S ROMANCE

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

I AM not going to give my readers the early history of Servia. I do not imagine they would read pages descriptive of those barbaric times, filled with heroes after the pattern of Siegfried and Siegmund, who are not interesting without their *leit-motif*, and their splendid yet savage surroundings. I will therefore pass over "the beginnings" of Servian history, with its rude manners and want of good breeding, and come to a really remarkable royal personage, Stephan Dushan,[1] son of King Detchant or Detschanski. King Detchant and his son did not get on very well together, so Stephan, who seems to have had somewhat loose notions as to the fifth commandment, took his father prisoner, confined him in the Castle of Zoetchane for a few months, and quietly and without any fuss placed him in the

[1] "Duchan" is sometimes used.

lethal chamber, where he passed away out of a very uncomfortable and badly heated castle. Prior to this event Stephan had caused himself to be crowned king, and was therefore securely settled on the throne when the death of his father was announced ; and as he was giving general satisfaction, no inquiries were made about the departed sovereign. Stephan soon began to show the stuff that was really in him : he was all on fire with ambition. His dream was to unite under the rule of Servia the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula. Further, he nourished the desire to oust the Emperor of the East from his throne and to wear the Imperial purple himself.

Pending the accomplishment of these grand schemes, he turned his attention to Albania, which he annexed as far as Durazzo, and three years later, in 1340, he acquired the whole independent portion as far as Janina. A favourable condition of circumstances connected with the disputes between the claimants for the Byzantine throne (Cantacuzenus and the young Emperor John Palæologus) enabled Stephan to make himself master of East Macedonia, with the exception of the two important towns, Seres and Salonica. In 1345 he declared himself Emperor, and sent ambassadors to Venice to organise a movement against Constantinople. The Venetians, however, although acting with much courtesy to the self-made Emperor, kept dexterously aloof from entering into an alliance.

On the 13th April, 1346, Stephan Dushan celebrated the ceremony of his coronation. It was a grand military and sacerdotal display, for on this occasion the new-made Emperor appointed the first Servian Patriarch, this dignity being conferred on the Archbishop of Ypek.

As a consequence of these new and ambitious developments the Byzantine monarch felt it necessary to strengthen his position by an alliance with his powerful neighbour, Turkey. The newly elected Emperor Cantacuzenus gave his daughter in marriage to the Turkish Emir Urkham, and in return an army of ten thousand Turks was sent to his help.

Dushan prudently put aside for the moment his ambitious designs against Constantinople, and turned his attention to the fair plains of Thessaly, which he rapidly annexed on the south side of Epirus. Salonica, however, still opposed a stubborn resistance to King Dushan, who had assumed the title "Stephanus by the Grace of God Emperor of Greece."

As Dushan's appetite for conquest grew with his increasing success, he now hungered after Constantinople; and in the hope that he might possess it he offered his daughter to the Emir Urkhan as a bride for his son. But the Emperor Cantacuzenus managed to get wind of this plot and to upset it, with the result that the army Stephan had sent against the Greeks was surprised by the Turkish

force and cut to pieces. Dushan succeeded, however, in extricating himself from the difficult position in which this reverse placed him. Although not advanced in years, he was growing blind and feeble. The last card he played was to effect an alliance with Pope Innocent VI. He despatched an embassy to Avignon, where the Holy Father was residing. The ambassadors were to convey the announcement that the Emperor Stephan, the head of Eastern Christianity, of his own consent submitted to the head of the Church. Innocent VI. received the submission and conferred on him the title "Defender of the Faith against the attacks of the Infidel Turks." At the same time, and probably in consequence of this submission, Venice, which had long been hesitating to become Dushan's ally, now concluded a treaty with him. But these two events, which for many years had been the objects of his thought, came just as death called upon him to quit the scene of his labours. He was actually on the way to Constantinople at the head of an immense army, when at Jambouli a violent fever seized him, and he died December 20th, 1356, aged forty-eight.

He had extended the kingdom of Servia to her earlier boundaries, with the one exception of Bosnia. His power gave protection and security to the smaller states, while the progress in his own dominions made a formidable barrier against the encroachments of the east.

Dushan had married the sister of the King of Bulgaria. Princess Helen was a woman of resolute character, a very worthy helpmate for her husband, and during the twenty-five years of his reign the friendly relations between him and Bulgaria were broken only once.

The loss of a ruler such as Dushan was a death-blow to the Servians in the struggle in which they were engaged. The country was only in its infancy, and there was no leader strong enough to take the command. The Turks with a large army attacked Servia on all sides. The remnants of the Servian army joined forces with the Bosnians, and both armies made a last stand at Kossova, where a bloody encounter took place. The Sultan of the Osmanlis and the Servian chief, or Krale, were both slain in the conflict, but the victory remained with the Turks. A treaty was entered into between the Sultan Bajazet and Stephan Lasarevitch, who had taken Stephan Dushan's position, by which the Servians were reduced to be vassals of Turkey, and to render military service when required.

This was the first blow to the liberty of Servia. It was the forerunner of centuries of misery, slavery, revolt, and subjugation. The painful story of a nation's sufferings would take too much space in this volume were we to enter upon it in all its terrible details. I shall, therefore, take up the story of Servia at the closing years of the eighteenth century.

In 1740 Maria Theresa ascended the throne of Austria. The Servians, whose situation had become at length insupportable, unable any longer to bear the burdens laid upon them, resolved to abandon their country and begin life afresh under new conditions. Hospitality had been offered them in Russia, where the Empress Elizabeth had placed at their disposal the immense territory which lies on the right bank of the Dnieper. Under the command of their leaders, Hèvat and Tokolitz, 100,000 Servians left their country for this asylum, where they lived and flourished. They built towns after a rude fashion, to which they gave the names of the Servian cities. Their capital was called Bachment. Soon they were joined by Servians from the Black Forest Mountains, and by degrees a regular army was got together under the command of Hèvat.

In 1788 a definite alliance was formed between Catherine, Empress of Russia, and the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II., to expel the Turks from the Balkan Peninsula. The Greeks placed their fleet at the service of the allied crusade, and an army of 200,000 men ascended the Danube, took possession of Belgrade, and became masters of Bosnia in 1789. In this campaign the Servians fought, in concert with the allies, under the command of Colonel Mihajevitch, and their knowledge of the Servian territory, as well as their bravery, made them useful auxiliaries. Led

by their Colonel, they penetrated further into the country, and, being joined by many native chiefs, they forced the Turks to retreat into Macedonia in January, 1790. The churches, which the Turks had turned into stables, were purified, and services of thanksgiving were offered up by the grateful people.

In the midst of this triumphant victory death carried off the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II., and although his successor, Leopold II., was desirous of continuing the late Emperor's projects, he was foiled by the breaking out of the French Revolution, which threatened the extinction of all monarchial authority, and, in a measure, paralysed all foreign policy. European sovereigns, in face of the common danger, thought only of drawing closer together, and abandoned for the moment all adventurous undertakings. The result for Servia was disastrous. By the Treaty of Sistova the nation was handed over to its enemy, Turkey, the only condition being that the Rayahs who had taken part in the revolution should not be molested (1791). The unfortunate Servians had to obey. "They evacuated the fortresses and ranged themselves in order of battle. Their fine appearance filled with admiration the Janissaries who were appointed to take their place. It is reported that one of these called out to the Austrian Colonel, 'Neighbour, what have you done to the Rayahs?'"

From this time the Servians understood that they

had nothing to depend upon but their own efforts, and, taking this lesson to heart, they formed the heroic resolution of working out their independence as a nation. Now began the workings of a silent revolution, like the sullen rising of a storm which at last breaks out in uncontrollable fury. Its immediate cause was the murder by the Janissaries of a number of the notables, including the Popes, who were accused of encouraging the people to revolt. The Archimandrite Rouvim was amongst the victims.

At this critical moment, when even the most optimistic friends of the cause could see no ray of hope, an unexpected deliverer appeared—a man who was destined to free Servia from her tyrant. This man, whose courage and daring during the struggle of 1788 had drawn upon him the enmity of the all-powerful Janissaries, was George Petrovie, commonly called Kara George, or Black George.[1] Driven from his home and family by his enemies, he fled to the mountains, hiding himself in the impenetrable shelter of the forests. Later on we find him the possessor of large flocks of sheep and carrying on a considerable trade in such with Austria. At this point of our history he was a man of wealth and position, and as a matter of course had friends in many influential

[1] Kara George was born at Vischitz, in the district of Kraguiewatz; the date of his birth is said to be 1770.

quarters. As may be imagined, hatred of the Turkish Government and its cruel oppression was uppermost in the minds of Kara George and his group of friends.

The first overt act of rebellion was directed against the Pashas, and the match having been once kindled, the flame of rebellion set all Servia blazing. In a few days the tyrant Turk was hunted out of the villages. The towns followed suit, the hated Janissaries having to retire within the walls of the citadels, where they fortified themselves as for a siege.

The triumphant Servians in their joy at their deliverance wished to elect Kara George as their leader. He at first refused, saying frankly that although he could fight, he did not know how to rule. "We don't want a ruler, we want a leader," said the crowd. The Kneses agreed to stand by him and give him the benefit of their experience. So Kara George became leader. He had engraved on his seal, "The Commander of the Servians." Later, after the glorious victory of Mischar (1806), he took the title of "Supreme Ruler."

It is not essential to our history to follow the victorious career of Kara George in the grand struggle which he led for the freedom of his country. This struggle ended, as all readers of history know, by the emancipation of the nation from the yoke which it had so long borne. In 1806 the conquering army

entered Belgrade (for the second time), after a long and arduous campaign. A little later, in 1807, the freedom of Lower Servia was assured by the capitulation of Oujitze. It was at the siege of Oujitze that we first hear the name of *Milan Obrenovitch*, who was to be the founder of the reigning dynasty of Servia. He is better known in contemporary history by the name of *Milosch*, descendant of a race of *Heidukes*, who had never bowed their proud heads before the Ottoman invader. Milosch was of noble birth, being a Knese of the ancient family of Rudnik, and son to Knese Obren, an extensive breeder of cattle, of large fortune, and a person of much consideration in his country.

The years which followed on Kara George's victories over the Turks were a time of trial and hard fighting, the sufferings endured by all classes being necessarily severe. It would have been well if that had been all : there were other causes of trouble which were actually generated by the new state of things.

To ensure unity of action in the field, it was absolutely necessary that there should be a military dictatorship. The safety of the country depended on the obedience of the Hospodars and Kneses to this autocratic form of government. Nevertheless, it was not unnatural that they, in view of their rank, together with the great service they had done their country, should claim, as they undoubtedly merited, a certain

amount of independence, and when Kara George refused their apparently reasonable demands, the disputes which ensued consumed valuable time which was needed to settle more pressing matters of national importance. When, in January, 1810, the Skupshtina[1] assembled for its first meeting, the Hospodars did not appear : several of them, those especially who had been close allies of Kara George, were awaiting the arrival of a Russian regiment which was to enforce their demands. Kara George made good use of their absence to influence the sitting members to pass a measure by which the whole authority was placed in his hands to the exclusion of the Hospodars.

These internal dissensions, however, soon sank into the background in view of the approaching peril. Napoleon was practically arbiter of the fate of Europe. His declaration of war against Russia, in 1812, forced the Emperor Alexander to sign the Treaty of Bukarest with Turkey, Servia being thus deprived of the independence she had gained.

Kara George attempted to induce the Sultan to recognise the independence Servia had acquired at so much cost, but his efforts failed. The Sultan would listen to nothing. Already by his orders the unfortunate negotiators of the Treaty of Bukarest, Morassi and his brother (who had interceded for Servia) had been strangled ; the Sultan was, in fact,

[1] The General Assembly or Parliament.

determined to dominate as before over Servia, and nothing less would content him.

Meantime the intrigues and jealousy which usually follow upon a great success were beginning to work with baneful effect against Kara George. The Hospodars could not brook that the swineherd should be ruler of Servia. Their pride and jealousy made them betray the best interests of their country by seeking the help of Russia against him : the practical result of this ill-advised move being that, when, in 1813, Kara George declared war against Turkey, the Russian Consul issued a veto on the ground that Servia should not make war against Russia's allies. Disheartened by this turn of events, and likewise disappointed at the ingratitude of the people of Servia, Kara George, on October 3rd, 1813, cast the dust from his feet and, accompanied by a few Wojwoden[1] who remained true to him, went into voluntary exile in Austria. The enemies of Kara George denounced this act of his, unjustifiably calling it by the name of treason. Such injustice towards one who had served his country well, and had retired only when his efforts on behalf of his people were thwarted by those whose strenuous support he might have hoped for, is a fresh instance of the ingratitude of nations.

If Kara George was to blame for deserting the sinking ship, praise must be accorded to the young

[1] "Wojwoden" answers to noblemen.

Milosch, of whom mention has previously been made, and who now stood firm under adverse circumstances, resisting the efforts that were made to induce him to abandon Servia to its fate and seek fortune elsewhere. "What should I do in Austria," he said, "if I leave behind me here my wife, my children, my old mother, all of whom would be sold as slaves? No. Whatever may be the fate of my compatriots, I shall share it with them." Milosch therefore remained at his post as colonel of the troops under his command until the soldiers, seeing the ravages committed by the Turkish army, lost heart and asked to be disbanded. Then, and not till then, did Milosch abandon hope and flee to the impenetrable forests of the Choumadia. He was accompanied by a large number of his fellow-countrymen, who were resigned to await the course of events and to share with each other all they had until such time as the heavy cloud of misfortune should again disperse.

The Ottoman Government was quick to understand that it was in consequence of his great courage that Milosch had acquired such influence over his fellow-countrymen. It saw therein a means of furthering its own interests, and approaching the young Hospodar in a friendly spirit, offered to give him the important post of governor of several districts in the neighbourhood of Rudnik, of which province he was

to bear the title of Knese.[1] The condition was made, however, that he should acknowledge the authority of the Sultan. Seeing there was no help for it, Milosch, with great prudence, agreed to the condition, took the oath of allegiance with as good grace as he could muster, and did homage to the representative of the Sultan. That he should have been able to do this without losing the confidence of his friends goes far to prove how perfectly they trusted in his honour and his prudence.

During the first year of his administration Milosch was able to alleviate some of the burdens that pressed heavily upon his countrymen. In 1814, however, an ill-advised rising of the oppressed Servians under Hadschi Prodon, which was at once suppressed, roused the suspicions of the Ottoman Government as to Milosch's share in the conspiracy. On the pretext of holding a friendly discussion, Kiara Pasha, the Commandant in Belgrade, called a meeting of the Kneses in the valley of the Takavo on April 15th, 1815. Milosch, although fully aware that it was the purpose

[1] The Knese was the principal owner of land and the most important personage of a place or province; therefore "the Knese of Servia" was really the reigning prince of the country, the other Kneses being his subjects. In November, 1807, says Chopin, he (Milosch) was elected by all the Kneses in Servia supreme Knese. The Metropolitans of Belgrade and Oujitze (both belonging to the Greek Church), together with three Servian Archimandrites, assisted at his nomination. It was settled that after his death he should be succeeded in all his dignities by his nearest of kin.

of the Government to take this opportunity of making him prisoner, appeared at the meeting and succeeded in persuading the Pasha that his services were necessary in order to collect the levy of money imposed upon the rebellious Servians. The order for his arrest was cancelled, and the meeting dispersed. Later on, however, at the Mass celebrated in the little church of Takavo, Milosch suddenly displayed a standard with the three Servian colours, while in a loud voice he exclaimed: "Evo mene, evo rata s. Turcima!"[1] ("Behold, I am here to declare war against the Turks!")

This declaration was received with enthusiasm, and Milosch was at once declared Commander-in-Chief. The news spread like wildfire. The Heidukes rushed from their hiding-places, while from Austria and Bosnia came regiments of armed Servians. The Commander-in-Chief presently found himself at the head of a large army of earnest men, who recognised that the time had come for a final struggle. If they lost now all would be over. "But there must be no thought of losing!" says Milosch. "We are fighting in a just cause; we shall win!" And the cry, "God is with us! God is with us!" was taken up by the excited soldiers: it echoed from battalion to battalion: the air was full of this appeal to Heaven—an appeal that was heard, for in spite of the superior training and other advantages enjoyed by the Turks, the Servians,

[1] These words still stir the heart of a Servian.

after three days' constant fighting, remained conquerors. The Turks, although in despair and defeated, refused to surrender to anyone but Milosch (who was an Imperial Knese), by whom they had been attacked. To him they consented to yield.

Milosch behaved as a generous enemy. He allowed the prisoners to depart, under a Servian escort, with their arms (cannon excepted) and as much ammunition as they could carry. It was wisdom on his part not to irritate with insults, for soon the last fortified place worth having came into his hands. It had been hard pressed and was ready to yield as soon as Milosch arrived before it. He made no insolent show of power, and granted the evacuating garrison a free pass with all their arms and property.

Milosch was now master of the situation. Still much had yet to be done ; a stormy time lay before the new governor. Success has an unfortunate element, that of raising the hydra-headed passion of jealousy. A success such as Milosch had scored was almost equivalent to a sentence of death. Turkey likewise had powerful allies. Servia, small and unknown, had practically only one ally outside its own boundaries. French as well as German historians consider England as one of the worst opponents of the hard-pressed little country : they maintain that it was owing to secret agents sent from London that a continuous agitation was kept up. These agents

sought to infuse distrust of Milosch in the minds of the nobles, Kneses, and Hospodars, the object being to bring about the interference of Russia in the affairs of Servia. Such interference would have been most displeasing to the Sublime Porte, and with gentle fanning of the flame, might have kindled a war between Russia and Turkey. England was credited with long sight as regarded her own commercial interests, which would gain by any falling out between the two nations.

As was only natural, the different interests at work, together with the novelty of the situation, brought to the front many causes of discord. Every fresh appointment was made the subject of a quarrel, which often broke up a lifelong friendship. At the opening of the National Assembly, or Skupshtina, one of the members, Moler, who was the nephew of the murdered Archimandrite Rouvim, suggested that the Government should be placed in the hands of four chiefs, of whom he hoped to be one. Milosch replied to this proposal by the remark: "The hare you propose to divide is still running in the wood." With great magnanimity, however, Milosch procured for Moler the high post of President of the National Chancery, a station for which he was better qualified than any other person, as he knew both the Turkish and Servian languages.

Just at this moment, when the internal affairs

of Servia were in a rather unsettled condition, Kara George made an attempt to recover the position he had lost by his flight to Austria. He had as allies in this attempt a number of Servians belonging to religious associations which bound them to hold together in the holy work of exterminating all enemies of their faith. On his arrival in Servia, Kara George had the evil inspiration to invite Milosch to join him in raising a fresh revolution. Milosch, on the other hand, considered this a most inopportune moment for any enterprise of the kind; neither had he any desire to re-establish Kara George in his former position. He therefore informed the Pasha of the arrival of the former leader of the people, also giving him information as to where he was concealed. In consequence of this treachery Kara George was cruelly murdered on June 13th, 1817, some say by the Janissaries, others by the orders of Milosch, carried out by the Momkies. "The profound grief shown by Prince Milosch for the tragic death of his old friend and companion in arms leaves no doubt of his innocence."

With every wish to share this opinion, expressed by one of Milosch's biographers (Coquelle), an opinion strengthened by the generosity and chivalry of Milosch's nature, of which his life offers many proofs, an unprejudiced reader must yet have some doubts as to his entire freedom from the charge of

betraying his friend. He was not a noble-hearted patriot working only for the good of his country. He was an ambitious man, who loved his country well, but his own interests better, and the presence of Kara George, his popularity and his hold on the affection and gratitude of the Servians, were undoubtedly obstacles in Milosch's path.

A long time, however, was to elapse before Servia received her complete emancipation. The Imperial manifesto which gave to Servia her autonomy made her, at the same time, tributary to the Porte. The annual tribute was fixed at 240,000 francs. The fortresses were to be garrisoned by Turkish soldiers, who were likewise given six departments where they could reside. Milosch Obrenovitch was recognised as hereditary Prince and Ruler of Servia.

To carry out this last clause to its full extent, the Sultan despatched Hussein Pasha to Belgrade, in order that he should invest Milosch with the dignity which, in accordance with the sovereign will of the nation, had been conferred upon him. This ceremony took place November 30th, 1830.

It is not necessary to describe the events which followed on the settlement of Servia and the crowning of Milosch. His reign was one series of trouble, discontent, and revolution, which finally terminated in his abdication. This event took place June 13th,

1839, and Milosch retired to the Castle of Sturaz. The people who loved him were filled with consternation when they saw their illustrious Prince depart from amongst them. They gathered in large numbers along the quays to see the last of him, and the sobs and cries of the women, the grief of the men, and even the cries of the children, made up a scene of such touching sorrow as is seldom seen.

[1] Sturaz is the highest point of the Rudneker Mountains. It commands a splendid view, and, being totally destitute of wood, it serves the purpose of a watch-tower, while the Rudneker Mountains are a fortress of Nature's own handiwork. Sturaz is approached by a steep precipice, dangerous to life and limb; the pathways up the mountain side need a sure guide and an agile climber to reach the top, and woe to an attacking force who would essay to capture this impregnable stronghold.

The Servians had never been slow in availing themselves of so welcome a shelter. In the constant wars which desolated the fair kingdom of Servia the Sturaz played a conspicuous part. It would take too long to tell the story of the many attacks to which this ancient rock was exposed. The Turks in the tenth century penetrated as far as the foot, but they had to retire, leaving behind them a terrible list of dead and dying, and since that time they have not ventured to approach Sturaz.

At one part of the wood stands the Castle Zenutja, which Prince Milosch built for his own use and that of the family. Here he spent the years from 1839 to 1858 in the strictest retirement; there being no protection for him elsewhere. The castle was built for security; the dwelling-house being set in the centre. Here the Prince and members of his family lived; the serving-men occupied the outer circle of huts, and thus protected the Prince and his family. There was also a large orchard of fruit trees inclosing the demesne, their planting being made a pretext to summon the (Momkies) soldiers. These dark days passed over, and when Milosch was recalled by the wish of the people, he gave orders that his mountain retreat should be kept as it was during his occupation.

On Milosch's abdication, his son, Prince Michael, took his place. He came to Belgrade in March, 1840, accompanied by his mother, Princess Loubitza, and his attendants. The beginning of his reign was marked by tumult and violence, and the intrigues of his father Milosch added considerably to the general disturbance.

Prince Michael, young as he was, had courage, and his youth gained him friends, but he could not make head against the difficulties of the position. Being finally deserted by friends and people, he made good his escape after only a few months' reign.

The Skupshtina being summoned in the first days of September, the question was put whether the young Prince should be invited to return. The answer was in the negative.

The whole of this scene had been prepared by Voutschitsh, who had long been seeking to be made ruler of the kingdom. To his disappointment the general voice was for Alexander Karageorgovitch, son of the great leader of 1806. His election was proclaimed amidst general enthusiasm, and at the same moment he was presented to the deputies, who saluted him as their Prince.

Alexander was born in 1806. After the death of his father he had returned to Servia, where he had lived, supported by a pension allowed by Milosch. Of late he had been attached to Prince Michael as

Adjutant. He was a young man of handsome person, amiable character, and with many good qualities. These, however, could not still the restless spirit of change which seems to have been part and parcel of Servian politics. Intrigues were set on foot to undermine the position of the new Prince and to bring back Milosch, who in his retirement was hungering to return to power. By the help of Russia he accomplished his wish.

The revolution of 1857, which was mainly due to Russian influences, was suppressed by Alexander with firmness, some said with cruelty. His unpopularity increased, and at the Skupshtina of 1858 another shuffle of the cards took place, Milosch being invited to return, while Alexander took refuge in a Turkish fortress. Everything was conducted with perfect order, and no disturbances took place. The moment was well chosen, the Powers of Europe having (1858) too much on their hands to occupy themselves with the changes in Servia.

The return of Milosch was a triumph. The Prince and his son Michael were received with such a welcome as must have gladdened the heart of the old man. Unfortunately, at seventy-eight years of age, the character of man, be he peasant or monarch, does not improve. Milosch, like the Bourbons, learned no lesson from the experience he had suffered; he governed as despotically as if he had never been

banished. The people who had recalled and welcomed him devoured their disappointment in silence; they dared not complain, consoling themselves with the thought that, considering his great age, his reign must be short. As a matter of fact, Milosch lived little more than a year. He died September 26th, 1860. His last act was to declare that the hereditary sovereignty of Servia was vested in the family of Obrenovitch.

Prince Milosch could neither read nor write. In despite of this drawback, he has left to posterity a handsome volume entitled *The Autobiography of Prince Milosch*. This work, which was taken down by a scribe from Milosch's dictation, is written in a tone of such simplicity, frankness, and earnestness as to present, we are told, an extraordinarily vivid picture of all the scenes of his undoubtedly stirring life. He describes how, in consequence of his want of education, he was obliged to entrust documents of importance to those who were able to read, while his answers on State affairs had likewise to be written by his secretaries. He gives in his memoirs a sample of his method of guarding against any betrayal of these confidential matters.

"I received a communication from the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. It was of great importance that the contents should remain private, and I was afraid of letting the men who read my correspondence

into the secret. I called the first scribe into my room and held the Emperor's letter before him, but I covered with my hands every portion of it save two lines. 'Read,' I said, 'these two lines.' He interpreted the lines. I sent for the second scribe and covered with my hand two more lines. Then I sent for a third, and so on, until I had gathered the sense of the whole letter."

In these memoirs Milosch undoubtedly displays the virtue of sincerity. While drawing with amazing frankness his own portrait, he describes his faults and virtues with clear insight. He speaks with bitterness of the ingratitude, the envy, and treachery he had encountered during his reign.

Milosch's eldest son and heir was Milan, a delicate youth, who, when he received the news of his father's abdication, was ill. His illness increasing, a regency was appointed which held office till his death, which took place the following year. It has been stated that he never knew he was a reigning Prince. His younger brother Michael succeeded him as Michael III.

It was much to be regretted that Milosch could not have infused some of his profound knowledge of human nature and its manifold windings into the mind of his successor Michael, a born idealist, who lived in a paradise where every man was full of goodness, and there was no such thing as ingratitude. According to him, the Servian nature was especially

faultless, and the blind confidence which the Prince reposed in his subjects would excite our admiration had it not bordered on folly. When his ministers, who knew the dangers which beset him at every corner, tried to open his eyes to the network of conspiracy around him, the Prince would smile a gentle, or rather feeble, smile as he replied, "I love my Servians, and my Servians love me. They will never betray me." Michael's short reign was marked by extraordinary tranquillity; the little kingdom flourished under his fostering hand; there was no sign of a coming calamity such as befell this amiable Prince.

Michael's government was marked by wise and useful reforms. He reconstructed the House of Parliament, or more properly the Senate, and made it a more important and useful body. His rules for the discipline of the army and for the maintenance of order were most excellently thought out, and were administered with the utmost impartiality. Under Prince Michael Servia enjoyed peace and prosperity: confidence was restored, the exiled Servians returned to their country, trade flourished, and the treasury was filled.

Unfortunately Michael was foolish enough to encourage the popular delusion that Servia should possess the Balkan Islands and Macedonia, as well as part of South Hungary, but soon finding that his

vision of creating a great kingdom was unattainable, he withdrew his support from the political party which championed this piece of folly, and thereby opened the door to the paid agitator, and with him came the reappearance of the former claimants to the throne.

Michael's marriage with Countess Juliana Hunjadi[1] had not been a happy one, neither had it been blessed with children. This was another reason why rival pretenders should come forward.

These rivals were Milutin Garaschanin and Karageorgovitch, both young, both clever, and full of courage and determination to succeed. Milutin Garaschanin was the son of Ilia Garaschanin, who had gained much fame by his services to the country. Ilia was full of ambitious hopes for his son, if not for himself, and Milutin was fed from his very childhood with the idea that one day he might be ruler of Servia.

Neither of these claimants was acceptable to Prince Michael. He sought for an heir of his own lineage.

It was known that Jefrenn Obrenovitch, who had

[1] The Princess Julie Hunjadi was much loved by the Servians. Ristitch, in his famous letter to Queen Natalie, draws a contrast between Prince Michael's neglected wife, "in whose veins flows the blood of kings, and whose descent goes back hundreds of years," and the daughter of Colonel Ketschko. "This noble lady was free from pride, pretension, and coquetry; she distinguished herself by the practice of the womanly virtues of ordering her household with economy and prudence."

married Marie Catargo, was dead, and that he had left a son who was by right the heir to all the honours, royal and otherwise, of the House of Obrenovitch, but where was this boy? Michael despatched messengers in every direction to seek the missing heir. One of these searchers was successful: Milan Obrenovitch, the heir to Michael, Prince of Servia, and the last of his race, was discovered in Bukarest at the Court of Prince Kusa, where his mother, Marie Catargo, filled an objectionable position, while the lawful wife of the Prince was kept in confinement.

Prince Michael could not at first make up his mind to act upon this report. There were wheels within wheels, as is always the case in the machinery of government. Prince Kusa was the ally of Napoleon III., who was then a terror to all Europe. Michael therefore would not put out a finger to do ought that might bring upon Servia the wrath of the French ruler, which he feared might be the case if he demanded the return of Marie Catargo to Servia. Fortunately for Milan, the course of events brought about his delivery. The Bulgarians revolted against Kusa's despotic rule, and thereupon he had to submit to the will of the people and lay down his crown. His wife, Princess Hélène, received her freedom, while Marie Catargo was placed under police supervision. The Prince was confined in his summer residence, where he was closely watched until after

his trial. The disclosures that were gradually made enraged the people still more against him, while Marie Catargo likewise came in for much reprobation. Jewels of great value, which had been stolen at different times from some of the great families in Bukarest, were found in her possession. After her banishment the police came upon disgraceful revelations, showing a state of affairs which is described in the police sheet as "*a puddle of iniquity*," and in the midst of this "puddle" the heir to the throne of Servia, Milan, had spent his childhood. The seeds of vice then planted in his young mind were never rooted up, and were bound to develop as they ultimately did: King Milan's whole history illustrating the theory of heredity in a manner which deserves the attention of those who make a study of such subjects.

CHAPTER I

IT was on the 10th of June, 1868, that the cruel murder of Prince Michael took place.

Prince Michael, accompanied by three ladies, his aide-de-camp, and a footman, was walking in the park of Topfschider, one of the favourite summer residences of the Prince. At a turn in one of the walks their passage was barred by three men, who bowed respectfully to the Prince; he returned their salutation and passed on. A few minutes later shots were heard, and the Prince fell to the ground (as did also Madame Auka), while her daughter and the aide-de-camp were badly wounded. As he lay on the ground with these assassins round him Michael clasped his hands over his breast, and in his dying voice said feebly, "No more, my brothers; it is enough." Even this dying appeal did not move the assassins to pity. Filled with fury, they drew their daggers and cut again and again at the prostrate Prince, inflicting the most terrible wounds, until he rolled over on the grass and expired. What must have passed through his mind in this awful moment—he who had so often

boasted of the fidelity of his subjects? "My Servians will never betray me," he would say when warned of his danger. Neither did they. The men who murdered Prince Michael were common assassins, hired to put him out of the way so that the throne of Servia might be occupied by his murderer.

Now there were only two men who would dare to do this deed. One was Garaschanin,[1] the other Alexander Karageorgovitch. We might safely say the last named was *the* one: everything points to this conclusion. The attempt was well planned, Karageorgovitch counting that the mass of the people would hold by him because he was supported by Russia, and, furthermore, that once Michael was out of the way, they had to choose between him and a boy of fourteen, and the chances were enormously in favour of the elder candidate, for whom the members of the Skupshtina would undoubtedly vote, in order to avoid the troubles of a Regency.

The murder of the unfortunate Prince Michael[2] was fraught with very dangerous issues for the family of Obrenovitch. This was specially the case in Belgrade. Therefore both statecraft and prudence

[1] There was no truth in the report of Garaschanin's complicity in Prince Michael's murder.

[2] To-day in Servia Prince Michael's memory is honoured as that of the noblest ruler Servia ever possessed. Pilgrimages are made to his grave, which is covered with floral tokens of remembrance.

would be necessary amongst the friends of young Milan if he were to have any chance of the vacant throne. One false step, and all would be lost.[1]

Milan was fourteen years of age when he succeeded his cousin. The interval of four years which had to elapse before he reached his majority was to be made use of by his enemies in a determined effort to wrest his throne from him. Candidates flocked into Belgrade. Karageorgovitch was not the only one

[1] In a letter from Ristisch to Prince Milan he gives some lifelike details of the murder, and it is remarkable that in this letter he says distinctly that for months the Prince was in daily, hourly danger of assassination. Day by day the net drew more closely round him, and the principal study of the Cabinet ministers was how to guard the Prince and how to baffle the designs of the conspirators. "Our efforts to guard the Prince's life were defeated by the Prince himself. In spite of the most stringent warning, the Prince persisted in keeping about his person those who were well known to us as connected with a gang of conspirators. It was not the fault of the Cabinet that in defiance of our repeated warnings and entreaties, he actually gave his murderers the opportunity they were longing for. He went straight to the part of the park where, under the shelter of the forest trees, they were hiding. Those who were with his Highness gave little assistance, and it will be our duty to sift this ineptitude on their part." Ristisch then goes on to describe his own activity. This has already been given. He concludes: "The future is again in the hands of the Obrenovie; the country teems full of confidence towards your Highness, and looks forward with affection and expectation to the day on which the youngest scion of this glorious dynasty will set his foot on Servian soil. The country is tranquil; the nation is heart and soul devoted to your illustrious dynasty, and both the nation and the Government are in a position to give your Highness every guarantee you can desire of their deep affection.

"I have the honour, etc.,

"JOVAN RISTIC."

who had counted on Michael's childless condition to make a bid for a vacant throne. There was also Milutin Garaschanin, who was fourteen years older than Milan, and who was the son of Ilia Garaschanin. Ilia was a fine statesman, and Servia had cause to be grateful to him; that is, if a country ever feels gratitude towards those who serve her interests. After all, there is much to put forward in extenuation of a nation's ingratitude. It differs from that of an individual. It is shared with others, and what is everybody's affair is nobody's. But to return to Garaschanin. Ilia was one of those who hated to see others more fortunate than himself. He had immense confidence in his own mental powers, and with justice, for he was a clever man, and he was determined that if he could he would grasp the highest position in Servia, either for himself or his son. Therefore it was that from his baby days Milutin Garaschanin heard nothing but stories of crowns and sceptres; his nurses sung ballads of knights who sat upon thrones, and king's daughters who married the knights who sat upon the thrones. When Milutin grew older and had passed through college, his father sent him to the Polytechnic in Paris, and from thence to the Artillery School in Metz. The people in Belgrade would say to one another, half joking, but with a touch of serious belief: "Ilia means his boy to wear a crown." They laughed, but Ilia did not mind their

laughing. He was a deep thinker, and his plots might have succeeded, for Milan had not many friends, and he was at a distance; but Ristisch's *coup-de-main* settled the matter, and Milan came back, as we know, to his kingdom.

From a review of the whole position it is easy now to put one's hand on the instigator of the terrible murder, and to see what his scheme was. Alexander Karageorgovitch, or his friends for him, had planned the crime with extraordinary cleverness. He counted on the votes of the greater mass of the Servian nation—this being not so much on account of his popularity with the people as their knowledge that he had the support of Russia, and further, that since Michael was removed, they had only to choose between him and a boy, and, all probabilities taken into account, it was almost certain that the Skupshtina would give their vote for Alexander.

Karageorgovitch remained in Semlin, and there waited till the news of the murder should reach him, when he would appear in Belgrade, and strike while the people were paralysed by the news. Numbers of his followers were already in Belgrade, waiting the signal to issue forth, and in the general confusion caused by the murder of the Prince, they would have secured the Castle and other places of importance. The plot was well conceived, but the one point upon which the whole plan shipwrecked was not taken into

account. This was the affection the people had for the murdered man. The Servians loved Prince Michael, and although, had he died from natural causes, they might have preferred Karageorgovitch as their ruler to a boy of fourteen, still their affection for Michael stood in the way, and made it impossible for them to hand over the boy-Prince to his cousin's murderer.

Milan's future was favoured by the very fact of the murder. Through all Servia it was said with one voice, that it was Karageorgovitch who had planned it. The aim of the crime was providentially frustrated. One of the park-keepers had from a distance beheld the murder of the Prince: he alarmed the Castle guard, which was soon on its way to the scene of the tragedy, and arrested the assassins before the news could spread. The murdered Prince was placed in his carriage sitting upright, and was driven through the streets of Belgrade to the palace. The people who greeted him as he passed along never suspected that their homage was offered to a corpse.

The gates of the palace had hardly closed upon the carriage and its ghastly occupant, when Ristisch, the Minister of the Interior, set to work to secure his inheritance for the boy-heir. No time was lost in announcing the death of Michael and proclaiming Milan Prince of Servia. With the same promptitude General Blasnavatz hastened from barrack to barrack,

making officers and soldiers swear allegiance to the young Prince, who was hastily summoned to assume with all speed his place amongst his people. Thus did the plans of the conspirators fail, and the House of Obrenovitch triumphed.

Milan Obrenovitch was the son of Jefrenn Obrenovitch, brother to Milosch; he was consequently cousin to the deceased Michael, and next heir to the throne. He was born at Jassy, August 22nd, 1854, his mother being Marie Catargo, of the rich and powerful race of Roumanian "*Hospodars*," who had been treated by Russia and Turkey in the most despotic fashion, and were reduced to the utmost poverty, their ruin being completed by the consequences of the Crimean War. The family of Catargo suffered in this universal distress. Jassy, where Jefrenn and his wife had taken refuge, is perhaps one of the most desolate spots in Roumania. Yet, desolate as it was, Marie, as we already know, found an admirer of her beauty and fascinations in the Moldavian Prince Kusa, whose attentions mitigated the dulness of existence, but were the cause of constant quarrels between her and Jefrenn. His wife's conduct and his poverty combined drove the miserable Jefrenn to take refuge in drink, which speedily terminated his unhappy life. This paved the way for Marie to secure for herself, on the most disgraceful conditions, the luxurious life she loved. Milan was an ill-fed,

neglected, and most miserable child ; cared for by no one, ill-treated by all. The Hospodar could not bear him in his sight, and his mother rarely saw him.

We have already seen that Milan had been found at Bukarest, at the Court of Prince Kusa. Michael had received this news with mixed feelings. He had little love in his heart for the memory of his uncle Jefrenn, but seeing that he was dead, his heart inclined to the boy, the only link left of the race of Obrenovitch. He finally sent a messenger who was empowered to treat with the boy's mother ; but she was on no account to accompany him. In fact, she was to give him up altogether, and to sign an agreement not to enter Servia. The messenger entrusted with this mission soon found that the last thing Marie Catargo desired was to accompany her son. She was enjoying life after the fashion of her class, and had no fancy to join the family circle at Belgrade. She was well pleased to be rid of the boy, who had always been the object of her dislike as reminding her of her early days. But she was a woman with a touch of sarcasm in her character. It amused her to picture to herself the disagreeable surprise it would be to her husband's cousin when he was presented with the illiterate, half-savage lad he had selected to be his successor. Well, at all events, she was rid of the brat. It seems Marie Catargo did not exaggerate the effect

produced on Prince Michael by the strange appearance of the heir he had summoned to his side, in spite of the efforts made to present the boy in a more respectable condition. He had been plentifully scrubbed, his hair had been cut, new clothes provided for him, but his bearing was far from princely, and Prince Michael could hardly resist a natural recoil from presenting as his future heir this uncouth lad, whose want of all education and whose roughness of demeanour were below that of the lowest outcast in Belgrade. In addition to these disadvantages, Milan, as was only natural, knew nothing of Servia. He had never seen a map; he could not read nor write; the only language he understood was the Roumanian dialect, and this, in addition to the other disqualifications, did not make the boy more acceptable to his uncle. Michael was, however, a sensible man, and, considering the situation, he came to the conclusion that such as Milan was, it was better after all than having no successor. It would at all events keep Karageorgovitch in check. Likewise the boy was young—a mere child: in time he would improve. The first and most necessary thing was to get him educated for the part he was to play, and the initial steps were taken without loss of time.

The progress the boy-Prince made in a short period was wonderful. Good food, good clothes, a

pleasant life, revolutionised the young savage. In the shortest possible time he won friends amongst all classes. He developed the most amiable qualities; he was obedient, anxious to please; he was brave, a good rider, a capital swimmer; he received reproof or punishment good-humouredly (the poor boy had been accustomed to the treatment given to a dog in the lowest degree of canine society, so he naturally thought nothing of an occasional whipping). After only a few months he had made such an advance as to be hardly recognisable. He spoke the language of the country fairly well, and in his studies pleased his masters, who were all attached to him. Besides this satisfactory progress he had acquired quite an elegant address, and it may be added that all through his life Milan was remarkable for singular courtesy of manner, although this did not prevent occasional lapses into a rough-and-ready manner of speech. There was, however, one fault, which was duly reported to his benefactor. He showed great indifference as to acquiring a knowledge of military strategy, and it was partly to induce greater application to this most necessary branch of the education of a Servian prince that Michael determined to send his heir to Paris, where he was placed under the charge of Professor Huet, who was to retain the office of tutor until the young Prince attained the age of eighteen.

Huet was a jovial, pleasant man, and it gave him

little trouble to secure the liking of the young Milan. Neither had he to draw what is called a tight rein, for he soon found the boy would do more for a kind word than for bullying or punishment. On the other hand, it has been said many times that the youthful Prince was allowed too much liberty. He showed considerable quickness in his studies, especially in the acquisition of languages, and his general ability, without being remarkable, gave great hopes for his future as a ruler. There was, certainly, only one ground of dissatisfaction from the point of view of his future position. Milan showed no martial spirit; his face never kindled with excitement at reading of stirring deeds; he did not care for the study of strategy, and he was bored with military tactics. It was in vain that his tutor represented to him that as Prince of Servia he would be called to the post of General-in-Chief of the army, and as such should be acquainted with every detail of military service. Milan only laughed at the notion of his being General-in-Chief, and even punishment would not bring him to see the matter as his tutor wished. His disobedience on this point had to be reported to Prince Michael, with the result that strict orders were despatched to Huet to adopt sterner measures with his pupil, else he (Huet) would have to be dismissed from his office. The future Prince of Servia must at all costs be made to do more than understand, he

must master military tactics in all the different branches. Huet, in conjunction with the French school, or Polytechnic, did all that was possible, but it was a hopeless task. Milan could not be got to pass the most elementary examination, and, as we shall see later on, the ignorance of the late King of Servia in the commonest detail of military strategy led to serious consequences. In all other branches of his education he was an undoubted success. He came forth from the hands of his teachers a thoroughly accomplished Prince. He spoke languages well, especially Italian and French. The universal verdict on the boy-Prince was favourable ; his manners were charming, and he had an air of deference to those older and more experienced in life which gained him many friends. The accounts sent by Huet of his pupil's proficiency rejoiced the heart of Prince Michael, who would say, "I am proud of my successor ; I shall leave my kingdom and my people in good hands." When, later, Milan passed his examination with distinction, Prince Michael, to show his satisfaction, wrote a letter to his nephew, in which for the first time he addresses him as heir to the throne of Servia. Up to this moment the prospect had been held out as likely, but from this time forward he was given the rank of "heir-presumptive," and received royal honours.

Prince Michael's further plans for his successor

were now definitely arranged. Except for short visits to Servia, he was to travel until he reached the age of eighteen, when he would take the position of hereditary Prince, on which occasion all the usual festivities consequent on a royal prince coming of age would take place in Belgrade, in which capital he would reside permanently. These plans were frustrated by the catastrophe of Prince Michael's murder in June, 1868. Milan, at the age of fourteen, came into his kingdom, which was secured to him by the cruel deed which was planned to bring about his destruction. The soul of a nation is often stirred by tenderness and compassion, and there is no doubt that in this instance it was the cruel murder of Michael that ensured to his boy-heir the love and loyalty of the tender-hearted Servians.

Milan, accompanied by Professor Huet, arrived in Belgrade June 23rd, 1868. He was received by the people with transports of delight that must have had a very discomfitting effect on the rival parties. Milan had everything in his favour; his youth, his position, his close relationship to Prince Michael, his handsome boyish face and gallant appearance—all these helped to make the boy-Prince the idol of his subjects. This was not welcome to either the Karageorgovitch or the Garaschanin party, who were wise enough to see it was not the moment to press claims which were founded on murder. The Servians, faithful to the

memory of the dead Prince, would hear of no ruler but Milan. With rage in their hearts and vows of vengeance on their lips, both Karageorgovitch and Garaschanin had to withdraw; and on July 27th the Skupshtina in full council acknowledged the right of Milan Obrenovitch, heir of the deceased Prince Michael, to be the reigning Prince of Servia, and paid homage to him as such. On the same day Marienovitch, who had exercised the duties of provisional Governor until Milan's arrival, handed over his insignia of office.

Four days later the young Prince made his entrance into Belgrade. The town was gay with flags and floral decorations, and every face was beaming with expectation and joy at the coming of the Prince. The landing-place where Milan was to disembark was crowded with serried rows of people. There were thousands gathered here to show their loyalty, and as Milan's young figure and boyish face were seen descending the gangway, shouts and cries filled the air, the men uncovered, the women waved handkerchiefs, while the hills echoed back the shouts of the welcoming crowd. It was a striking scene: on one side the countless multitude, on the other the boy-King in the midst of the group of ministers and regents. His clear young voice made itself heard through the silence of the great crowd as he made answer to the address presented to him.

THE KONAK, BELGRADE.
It was in the building on the right that King Alexander was assassinated.

"I promise you that I shall strive to be a good ruler over Servia. I promise you that I shall do my duty towards all my subjects, and I promise you that I shall to my dying day preserve faithfully the honour and integrity of Servia, and shall be ready to shed the last drop of my blood to defend its rights."

On July 5th the coronation took place in the Metropolitan Church, Belgrade, the ceremony being conducted with as much pomp and magnificence as was possible in the circumstances. The people, who were, and are still, of a highly strung and romantic temperament, were ready to worship their boy-Prince. They took off their cloaks and placed them under his feet, that he might walk on them; they clustered round him, kissing his garments and blessing him as their very own; they worshipped his handsome face and loved his boyish smile. If ever a Prince had a fairy-tale existence, it was young Milan at this period of his life. It was in one sense a bad experience, and it required much sense in those about him to keep their young charge's head steady. The Sultan added his quota of intoxication by sending a special messenger to invest the *youngest* occupant of a throne with the insignia of the Turkish order.

The coronation being over, the young Prince took up his residence in the Castle of Belgrade. A Regency was appointed, which was to consist of three members, who were to administer to the country until the Prince

attained his majority. The three regents were Dr. Jovan Ristisch,[1] Dr. Gawilovie, and General Blasnavatz. One of the regents deserves special mention. This was Dr. Jovan Ristisch, to whom was entrusted the special charge of the young Prince's education. This task he fulfilled in the strictest sense of the word "fatherly," for no father could have watched more carefully over a precious son. If some of his measures were a trifle old-fashioned, and the rein perhaps drawn occasionally too tight, it must be remembered that such was the practice in the sixties, when youth was not allowed the control of its passions, and, so to speak, the bringing up of itself.

For the rest, Milan seems to have been at this time an admirable youth. He studied diligently, at the same time enjoying riding and other sports suitable to his age and station. It was, perhaps, an oversight not to have sent him to a University, where he would have mixed more freely with young men of his own age. But again there were difficulties in the way. The simple-minded people would not have trusted their idol out of their country. They idolised their boy-ruler. Every day they stood in long, closely packed lines watching to see him come out of the Castle to ride or drive; as he passed along, smiling affectionately on his people, blessings were showered upon him. There was, however, another side to this picture of devotion. There were those who hated the

[1] Commonly called *Ristic*.

boy because he had crossed their plans. From start to finish these men made Milan's crown full of thorns. Karageorgovitch, whose designs he had defeated at the very moment when they seemed ripe for success, was the first to set up a secret agitation against the young Prince. All those who were enemies of the Obrenovie, or who had been disappointed in getting places under the new administration, hastened to enrol themselves under Karageorgovitch's standard. His agents were scattered all over the country. They were well supplied with money by those to whose advantage it was to sow the seeds of discord between Russia and Turkey. Bribes and promises were given broadcast; pamphlets full of treason and sedition were distributed. In these the boy-Prince was described as an usurper, and the people of Servia were called upon to rise in their thousands and restore the throne to the descendant of the glorious patriot, Kara George.

Through all this stormy period of unrest and sedition the young King had the support of his ministers. Ristisch especially stood bravely by his young charge, but all and each worked as honest guardians to suppress this dangerous conspiracy, while at the same time the good of the people was considered and the interests of the country were upheld. It may be said of Milan's guardians that they worked as honest men should do, and to them Prince Milan owed his crown and his kingdom.

Four years went by. The Regency came to an end; the leading strings were cut away, and at eighteen the fledgling Prince was declared of age to govern the kingdom of Servia. According to the existing law, which had declared him "Majeur," he could now dismiss the Council of Regency and govern his kingdom unaided. Wisely, and with much youthful graciousness, Milan begged the retiring ministers to continue in office for a longer period. He was so young, so inexperienced, he pleaded, quite unfit to act with forethought and wisdom for the good of the nation. His education was still unfinished; he had yet to travel to see other countries. Till this tour was completed he begged them to remain in office.

It can be said that this proposal had been considered previously, and was no surprise to the ministers, such surprises not being usual in political life. Still, credit must be given to the manner in which the young Prince acquitted himself of his task. At this period of his life Milan was undoubtedly a charming personality, and from all sides there was a chorus in praise of the youthful sovereign. His tour included a visit to Constantinople, Vienna, and Paris, where he had many friends. His success was complete. The peculiarity of his position, his youth, and a certain charm possessed by only a few, but which is impossible to define, made him friends wherever he went.

When he returned from his tour the Minister of Finance drew a wry face at the bill for the King's amusements; but after all, there had been a long minority; there was money enough, and one must buy one's experience of life.

During the last few months of his first visit to Paris, while he was a pupil of Professor Huet, he was brought in contact with his mother. Marie Catargo had fallen on bad times. It has already been mentioned that the people had risen against the tyranny with which her protector Kusa exercised his authority. His house was attacked, and he and Marie were in danger of being killed by the excited mob. The officers of the law could only protect them as far as the frontier, where they were left to their own devices; but they received a caution that if either of them returned to Roumania no protection would be accorded them. The pair did not require to be told this twice, but hastened with all speed to Paris, where they did not fill so distinguished a position as they had done in Bukarest. Marie was well aware that her son was in Paris, but she did not trouble herself about him. One day she happened to be driving through the Rue Lafayette, and it suddenly struck her it might be as well to pay him a visit. She told the coachman to stop at No. 15. Here she presented herself to Huet as the mother of his pupil, and explained to him that

the object of her visit was to see her son. Huet made no objection, and went to fetch his pupil. The effect produced on the young Prince was as if a viper had suddenly crossed his path. It was with the utmost difficulty he was prevailed on to go to his mother. Marie, who was a clever actress, opened her arms as if to embrace him, but as he remained stock still she became hysterical and cried :—

"My son, do you not know your mother?"

"No, madam," replied Milan quietly and coldly.

"I am your mother!" cried Marie vehemently.

Milan took two steps forward, took her hand and kissed it formally.

"You no longer love your mother," she said in a tragic tone.

The Prince gazed at her; her eyes sank before that look of silent reproach.

Marie, seeing she could make no impression, laughed.

"It is quite indifferent to me," she said, "whether you like me or not; we can get on without one another. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," answered the young Prince quietly.

But when his mother had gone, and before Huet had time to reprove him for his undutiful conduct, he burst out crying, and wept for more than an hour.

The time had now come when the great event of a

man's life, be he prince or ploughman, takes place. Of course by this I mean to indicate that the period had arrived when Milan had to choose a consort to share his royal dignity. There was need of a woman's influence at the Court of Belgrade. A young unmarried prince forms, as a natural consequence, a sort of centre for intrigue and scandal. Moreover, Milan was an admirer of pretty women, and therefore the gossip was becoming much too lively. The ministers, who, on account of his youth, considered the Prince far more sinned against than sinning, were all anxiety to rescue him from the hands of these "harpies," as they designated these Eves who were walking in the royal garden ; and as the best method of routing the too fascinating ladies was a young and charming wife, they set about seeking a consort for their young monarch. The task was more difficult than they had at first imagined. They thought, as the reader would naturally think, that a young, rich, handsome Prince, gallant in bearing, and with a romantic and somewhat out-of-the-common story, would find enthusiastic women ready to overlook certain blemishes in his heraldic tree. It was true that similar blemishes had proved a hindrance to the courting of Louis Napoleon, but then, Napoleon III. was short and ill-favoured, while Milan was beautiful to look upon. Strange to say, the story of Napoleon III. was repeated in the present case, and so it has been proved.

to demonstration that to stand well in the Almanach de Gotha gives a prince a better chance than to have fairies for godmothers.

One cannot help a feeling of sympathy with Milan, who was deeply humiliated at the rebuffs he received. He would have nothing more to say to matrimony. But again his ministers with grave faces counselled and remonstrated, and Milan after a time lent a willing ear to their advice, the cause of his acquiescence being that at this moment a certain Hungarian Count had arrived in Belgrade, and his beautiful daughter had captivated young Milan's heart. The *pourparlers* concerning this alliance lasted a considerable time. In the end the Prince was refused, the Count considering the *insecurity* of Milan's throne to be a bad investment for his daughter's future. She shortly afterwards married a man of noble lineage and moderate fortune.

This disappointment put an end for a time to Milan's matrimonial pursuit. Fate, however, took the matter in her own hands and brought about the desired event in a strangely romantic fashion.

CHAPTER II

DURING the winter of 1875 Prince Milan spent some time at Nice. It was a brilliant season, and the young ruler of Servia was the object of general attention. He was lavishly generous and hospitable. His notice was eagerly sought for, especially by women, with whom his handsome appearance and affable manner made him singularly popular.

Amongst the visitors at Nice was a Russian family of wealth and distinction. The father, Colonel Nathaniel Ketschko, claimed a direct descent from the ancient race of Comnenus, which had given to the world numerous kings and rulers. In the archives of the family there were said to be authentic documents which proved their ancient lineage. According to this chronicle the head of the Ketschkos, after the fall of Constantinople in the fourteenth century, left Turkey, and making his way to the south of Russia, finally settled there, becoming a Russian subject. In their new country the family attained high position—furnishing ministers to the Administration, and generals to the Army. "They formed high alliances and

rose to great distinction." In the seventeenth century we hear of a General Ketschko, who was Governor of the islands in the Archipelago. He gained great renown for his assiduous efforts to reclaim the land and civilise the people of these low-lying and hitherto unprofitable islands. Another member of the Ketschko family was General Ivan, who greatly distinguished himself. His son, Miroslaw Ketschko, was the confidential friend and adviser of the Czar, while his brother, through the influence of Potemkin, occupied an equally high post. The social distinction acquired by the family equalled in brilliancy their other successes, while, to their credit, neither their honour nor their honesty was ever impeached. "As honourable as a Ketschko" was almost a proverb.

In addition to this, the family was considered amongst the wealthiest in Russia, and their vast fortune, being administered with care and absence of all extravagance, increased from generation to generation. Colonel Ketschko, who is now in question, was said to have an income of 400,000 roubles.

At first sight it may seem somewhat singular that a family of such wealth, and so distinguished in its several members, should not be ennobled, but Colonel Ketschko preferred his own respected and ancient name to a mushroom title of nobility which would in no way add to his importance. The family tree on both sides could bear inspection, but it is not perti-

nent to this history to discuss the several branches: sufficient has been said to show its antiquity. Colonel Ketschko, with whom this narrative deals, had married one of the beautiful daughters of Prince Stourza. So beautiful was she, that when Nicholas, Czar of Russia, saw her, he gave vent to his admiration in the following romantic speech: "I would I were a beggar, that I might every day ask your alms and have the happiness of kissing your hand." The Princess Stourza was on her side connected with the highest and most exclusive Russian nobility, such as the Murussi, Gortschakoffs, and Ghikas; and although Colonel Ketschko's family was not of noble rank, the name had, nevertheless, that prestige of nobility which belongs to an illustrious ancient race. Of the three children born of this marriage, two daughters and one son[1] made up the family in 1875. The elder of the two girls, Natalie, had passed her sixteenth birthday, and was living in Paris with her mother's sister, Princess Murussi, at the time Milan made the acquaintance of the family. The fact of having a beautiful mother does not ensure beauty to her children, nature playing many strange tricks, such as skipping a generation, or reproducing a crooked nose or cavern mouth which belonged to some ill-favoured ancestress, and grafting it on to the little stranger. No such mischance, however,

[1] This son dying, Colonel Ketschko's large fortune was divided between his daughters.

happened to Colonel Ketschko's daughters: both were beautiful. Natalie, the elder, was the more lovely. Her beauty, especially in her girlhood, seems to have had a wonderful attraction for all who saw her. "She had," writes one who knew her in those early days, "an irresistible charm that permeated her whole being with such a harmony of grace, sweetness, and overpowering attraction, that one felt drawn to her with magnetic force, and to adore her seemed the most natural and *only position*." It would be impossible to define where this charm lay. In her beautiful dark eyes, perhaps; eyes which were as the windows of her soul, flashing with anger, kindling with enthusiasm, dancing with gaiety, or softening into exquisite tenderness, loving-kindness, and sweetest compassion. Her mouth was rather large, but the beauty of the smile which lit up her face with a flash of light condoned any defect. Moore, in one of his prettiest melodies, sings of the effect of a smile upon the masculine heart:—

> "Woman, be fair; we must adore you;
> *Smile*, and the world bows before you."

From her childhood Natalie had shown very remarkable qualities. She learned with such facility as to be a special favourite with her teachers, who for this reason fostered where they should have corrected her tendency to over-weening pride and ambition.

She made no attempt herself to correct these defects, but seemed rather to glory in them, and on this account received many admonitions from her parents. Her father on one occasion, lamenting these faults in her character, remarked: "My daughter Natalie causes me much anxiety; she will not accommodate herself to our simple, almost *bourgeois* style of life, but takes all the airs of a queen."

When she was sixteen years of age Natalie was sent to Paris for the purpose of finishing her education. Here she lived with her mother's sister, Princess Murussi, who loved her as her own child. The young girl, although only on the threshold of girlhood, was so developed, and so wondrously beautiful, that she had already gathered round her a court, of which she was the queen. The Parisian *jeunesse dorée* was likewise well aware that Natalie was rich as well as fair to look upon. Amongst her admirers there was one, a young Servian officer, who seemed to have been a favourite companion of the young beauty. He represented himself as being (as he was) cousin to Prince Milan of Servia, of whom he often spoke; the object of his so doing being to enhance his own importance in the eyes of Natalie, who listened with evident interest to all he had to say of Milan. Men in love are proverbially blind to everything but their own passion, therefore it never entered into the mind of Konstantinovitch that his warm

praises and his interesting details as to the splendid character and handsome appearance of his royal cousin might arouse in the young girl's heart a deep interest prejudicial to his own concerns. The story, which bears the marks of truth, goes on to tell how at last Konstantinovitch took courage and asked Natalie to be his wife, speaking in terms of passionate love, which, however, seemed to rouse no corresponding flame in her breast. She listened quietly, and then considered for some minutes without speaking. At last, in answer to his passionate request, she gave the oracular reply : "We shall see."

This curious answer, half consent and yet not binding, has been attributed by those who discuss this tale to the young girl's wish to keep on good terms with her admirer until the arrival of the Prince of Servia, who she knew was on his way to Paris. It has been stated that the object of his visit was to see Natalie, and to judge whether she was as lovely as her portrait, which had been sent to Minister Ristisch with a full account of her lineage and the amount of her dowry, and that all this was a Russian plot to draw Servia into the Russian net.

Meantime Prince Milan had started on his journey. He was all eagerness to see the original of the portrait. He thought of nothing else, waking or sleeping; for in his dreams he still saw the bewitching face which had taken possession of his thoughts. At

last the French capital was reached. It was still early, and some hours must pass before Milan could present himself to the Princess Murussi. He had written to her (as is the orthodox manner abroad), fixing midday as the time he would do himself the honour of waiting upon her. This left five or six hours which Milan had to get through as best he could. Fortunately, he remembered that a Servian lieutenant, Alexander Konstantinovitch, a distant cousin of the House of Obrenovitch, was aide-de-camp or attaché to the Servian agent or Consul. After breakfast Milan drove to the Consulate. The young men fraternised, smoked, and drank in the aide-de-camp's room, and talked of many things. Konstantinovitch, whose thoughts were full of Natalie, soon began to tell his love story—how he had lately made the acquaintance of the lovely daughter of a Russian colonel, and how he was, if not *actually*, all but engaged.

"But has she said 'yes'?" asked Milan.

"Well, not exactly. She doesn't say 'yes' or 'no' positively, but you know the old proverb: 'The woman who hesitates——'" Then, after a pause, he added that he hoped that very day the matter would be decided in his favour. He was convinced it would be if only his royal relative would accompany him to the house of the lady's aunt, and make the definite proposal for him.

As Konstantinovitch had carefully refrained from

mentioning names, the Prince agreed, partly out of kindness, and also because it would fill in the time until the hour came when he was to present himself at the house of Princess Murussi. He was also a little curious as to this affair of his cousin's; and, besides, he was always anxious to help a friend.

The two young men drove to the address given by Konstantinovitch to the coachman. Milan did not trouble about the name of the street, which, had he heard it, might have awakened his suspicions. When they arrived at the house, the young men were admitted and shown into a handsome apartment. In a few moments the door opened and an elderly lady appeared. Leaning on her arm was one of the loveliest girls Milan had ever seen. She was in the first blush of youth, a child with a woman's grace and an angel's soul smiling in her eyes. Milan caught his breath; he was strangely disturbed and uneasy, he knew not why. His face flushed, he made a step forward, but Konstantinovitch was before him.

"Allow me," he said, "to present to your Highness Princess Murussi and her niece, Natalie Ketschko, my affianced wife."

One can imagine the situation. Milan's face flamed with rage. He thought he had been brought there on purpose to be humiliated. Natalie was overcome with confusion at finding herself in such a situation. No one spoke, for no one could trust

his or her voice. The lieutenant alone looked triumphant.

The Princess Murussi was the first to recover. In a cold, decided voice she said :

"Excuse me, Monsieur Konstantinovitch, you are not stating the truth. My niece, Colonel Ketschko's daughter, is not engaged to you."

The situation now became clearer. Milan was easily convinced that the whole thing was nonsense, while Konstantinovitch saw that he had made a great mistake, and withdrew, abashed at his own folly.

Then followed some sweet hours for Milan, who grew every moment more deeply in love with the beautiful, engaging, and altogether charming Natalie.

This first visit of Milan's lasted a considerable time. The Princess entertained him at dinner, and after dinner the financial side of the love affair was gone into. It did not take long, and was in all ways satisfactory. The Princess informed Milan that Natalie's present *dot* amounted to five million roubles, and that all rights over this sum would be handed to the Prince on the wedding day. Everything was in perfect order. The papers were sent to Ristisch and found correct.

The happiness which the Prince now enjoyed was such as he had never before experienced. All Paris was interested in the young lovers ; the beggars in the street blessed them as they drove by. Rarely

was seen so beautiful and interesting a couple. Each day their love for one another grew. They looked into one another's eyes; they held one another's hands; they listened to the tender words each spoke to the other. It was an idyll, and Paris, which loves idyllic situations, looked on with much sympathy at this romance, which they thought had a *mise-en-scène* that only Paris could give.

For reasons of convenience, the wedding did not take place in Paris, Vienna being chosen for the event, which excited much interest in all the European Courts. Youth, beauty, and the peculiar circumstances gave a romantic setting to this unique marriage; nevertheless, although universal sympathy was displayed, the cordon which hedges in royal dignity could not be slackened, and, as was the case at Napoleon III.'s marriage, no royalties or royal representatives attended the wedding festivities of Milan and Natalie. Milan, who was not prepared for the slight, had to swallow this mortification as best he could. He was, however, too much in love to allow his mind to dwell long on any subject but his approaching happiness.

A few evenings before his wedding a curious incident occurred, which, as the Servian mind is naturally superstitious, must have cast a slight shadow on the Prince's happiness. As Milan was leaving the house where Natalie resided with the

Queen Natalie at the time of her Marriage.

page 60.

Princess Murussi, he was accosted by a woman, apparently of the middle class.

"What do you want with me, madam?" Milan inquired, with the courtesy he invariably showed to every woman, whatever station she might occupy.

"I wish to speak a few words which concern your Highness."

Milan started. "Then you know who I am. Who are you?" he questioned.

"I know your appearance well," replied the woman, "and that you are the Prince of Servia, for I am in the service of Princess Murussi, the aunt of your affianced wife." She paused, and after a few minutes she spoke again in a voice full of grave, prophetic solemnity. "Your Highness, listen. I love Natalie. I have waited on her since she was a child. I implore you not to marry her. Nothing but misery can come of such a union. You like to rule, to command; so does Natalie. *She* will be ruler. Two such as you and Natalie should not be united. Be warned in time, for unhappiness will surely follow your marriage."

Needless to say, Milan was not warned, but he afterwards recalled the incident, and when too late regretted he had not followed the advice.

On the 17th October, 1875, the streets of Vienna were crowded with sightseers, all hurrying towards

one central point, the Leopold Strasse, in which street was the large hotel, "Weisse Lamm," where the Prince of Servia and his bride were to entertain the guests who were invited to the royal wedding, which was to take place at the Greek Church, as Natalie and Milan were of that communion. The ceremony was performed by the Metropolitan Michael. Although the service was not to begin until twelve o'clock, the extraordinary interest which was excited by the unusually romantic story had brought together a crowd such as seldom gathered in the streets of Vienna. As early as nine o'clock it was hopeless to think of making a passage through the serried mass, or to reach either the Prater or the railway station.

At last the long wait came to an end. Twelve o'clock boomed from the churches, and the moving mass swayed and stretched their heads in expectation. Then came in sight the royal carriages, which the Emperor Francis Joseph (who had taken much interest in the young pair) had placed at Milan's service. In the first of these sat the Princess Murussi, with the bride Natalie, upon whom all eyes were turned. She was a lovely apparition in her bridal dress of simple white satin covered with garlands of flowers. On her well-set head she had a tiara of magnificent diamonds, the sparks from which were outshone (so says the narrator) by the lustre of her eyes; her whole countenance was irradiated with happiness,

and it was easy to read in her beautiful expression that this was the happiest moment of her young life.

The second carriage followed immediately upon that in which were Natalie and the Princess Murussi. In it was Prince Milan with his mother, Marie Obrenovitch, whose commanding appearance and undoubted beauty (although marred by a certain coarseness) made her a striking personality. That after the cruelty and neglect she had shown towards Milan he should have chosen her to be so closely associated with him in his hour of happiness seems curious, but we are told by way of explanation that the estrangement between Milan and his mother was looked upon by the Servians (who are strict observers of the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother") as a want of filial duty on the part of the Prince, who should have been blind to the shortcomings of his parent, it not being his office to punish her, although her conduct towards him had been wanting in every respect. In view of the unpopularity which her absence from her son's wedding would have caused, this public demonstration of friendly relations was made. We may, however, imagine that the enforced companionship must have been uncomfortable.

The preparations which were made by the proprietors of the "Weisse Lamm" were on the most

sumptuous scale, Milan having given orders that no expense should be spared. One cannot, however, avoid noticing that, while every honour was paid by Milan to his bride and to his guests, the company, although including some high-sounding names, lacked the presence of royalty. What was wanting in royal distinction was, however, amply atoned for by the happiness which beamed in the countenances of the newly married lovers. The Prince, in reply to a congratulatory speech made by one of his ministers, charmed his listeners by the closing words :—

"I wish from my very heart that every one of my subjects, as well as everybody I know, could be always as happy as I am at this moment."

Previous to the signing of the marriage contract which was to unite Milan and Natalie, Russian intrigue seems to have been at work. There is nothing extraordinary that such should have been the case, most royal marriages having political threads intermingled with love-knots. Sometimes there is little love and much policy, but here the love element undoubtedly preponderated. Nevertheless there seems to be a general opinion that young as she was at the time of her marriage, Natalie had already been mixed up in political affairs. Russia employs every instrument for her own purposes, and even young girls are utilised to further political schemes.

The following statement has been made by trustworthy writers :—

"On the very day of Natalie's marriage to the Prince of Servia she had an interview of great length with the Russian ambassador, who sent a despatch to St. Petersburg couched in the following terms :—

"'When Natalie Ketschko, a good Russian, enters Belgrade as Princess, Russia will put her foot on Servia.'"

At Joanka, where a relative had lent the newly married couple a country seat, Milan and Natalie realised, we fain would hope, their dreams of happiness—a happiness which lasted too short a time, for it was soon apparent that the vows and hopes exchanged during that brief honeymoon had been written on sand. The time passed quickly, and the cares of life obtruded themselves ruthlessly. Natalie had now to find that her new dignity brought with it some sacrifices. Still, we may be pretty certain that the novelty of her high position was pleasing to the girl of sixteen. The title of Princess is essentially popular. It conveys the idea of youth and beauty. Our Queen was an ideal Princess, with her sweet, youthful, sunny face, her happy smile, and her girlish appearance. Natalie was perhaps even more beautiful, but not so winsome. No woman has ever won hearts as did "our own Princess," as the people still call her present Majesty.

To return to our young couple, who are about to take up the cares of life : their united ages made the total of thirty-seven years—a short span, and what a long vista lay before them ! Happy for them that they could not see how it was finally to end !

It was only natural that, however much she may have regretted leaving her happy retreat, Natalie should look forward with elation and curiosity to her entrance into the capital of the principality over which her husband ruled.

"The reception at Belgrade was beyond description," says a writer on the subject. "The festivities lasted three days, and during that time the love of the people for their Prince and their admiration of the beauty and charm of his bride were beyond words fitly to describe."

The young Princess was calculated to win the hearts of the Servians. In the first flush of her loveliness (which even in later years captivated all hearts) Natalie presented a picture of beauty and youth which has hardly ever been equalled. Eugénie Montijo was lovely, but hers was the loveliness of a woman whose charms are aided by experience and set off by the advantages of perfect dressing. Natalie's charm was all her own. Her extreme youth, her innocent and candid expression, her lovely eyes, and a certain air of innocence and goodness which seemed to surround her, and in which she may be

said to have moved, appealed to her new subjects and won their hearts.

Their welcome was enthusiastic. But as on the brightest day clouds may gather, so amidst this general rejoicing there was one unfortunate element; there was one miserable heart in the midst of this gay scene, and one dissentient voice amongst the general acclamation. Ila Marienküsch had for a short time unfortunately attracted Milan by her beauty. That any question of marriage had ever arisen was not likely, but he had been Ila's hero, her one and only love; and while the crowds shouted and the guns fired, and the bride smiled her lovely smile, the miserable Ila eagerly scanned her rival's face, and with rage and agony in her heart acknowledged, as women at times have to do, that her own beauty was as a farthing rushlight compared with that of Milan's bride. She was transfixed, this wretched girl, whilst gazing at the woman who had driven her from Milan's heart. She was apparently calm as she intently watched the royal pair land from the ship. She saw the tender look on Milan's face as he offered his arm to his bride; she heard the shouts of welcome given by the crowd, the outpourings of their love and admiration; she was as if turned to stone. But when the Prince and Princess approached in their equipage, and came nearer to where she stood, the spell was broken, and Ila Marienküsch made a step forward

with the intention of striking the Princess. Fortunately the police, who kept vigilant guard, and who had been watching the wretched girl, caught her arms and drew her back before she could effect her purpose.

When her trial came on she was found by the jury to be insane, and was confined in an asylum for life; but the episode was unfortunate, as it caused gossip which reached the Princess's ears.

The wedding festivities came to an end and the Servian capital resumed its usual tranquillity, for Belgrade is a somewhat sleepy city. As I do not suppose many of my readers have visited Belgrade or are acquainted with its society, I will leave the newly married pair for a short space and devote some words to the city and its inhabitants.

Belgrade, or, as it is called in the native tongue, *Biograd*, meaning the white citadel or fortress, is situated on the banks of the Save River, a tributary to the Danube. Its position is favourable for trading with both the East and West. In the disputes that were constantly arising between Austria and Turkey, Belgrade, owing to its intermediate position, suffered much in consequence.

When once he has passed the frontier the traveller feels he has left the West behind him; the East may be said to begin with Belgrade. Much of the romance of the East has been rudely torn away, and this is

specially noticeable in a town like Belgrade, which is intensely cosmopolitan. The change has taken place rapidly; those who knew Belgrade in the middle of the last century would hardly recognise it now. The capital of Servia was then in possession of the enemy of the land, the rapacious and hostile Turk; there was that depressing atmosphere which is generally met with in a conquered country; everything told that same tale of decay and squalor which is so marked in cities under Moslem rule.

A visitor to Belgrade in 1830 describes it as being one long street crossed by narrow alleys or smaller streets. It was an ill-smelling, dirty town, with only the romance of its situation and the beauty of its surroundings to recommend it. Most of the houses at this date, including the King's palace, were built of wood, and constant conflagrations took place.

The following interesting account is from the note-book of a traveller who visited Belgrade when the Turkish rule was still in the ascendant.

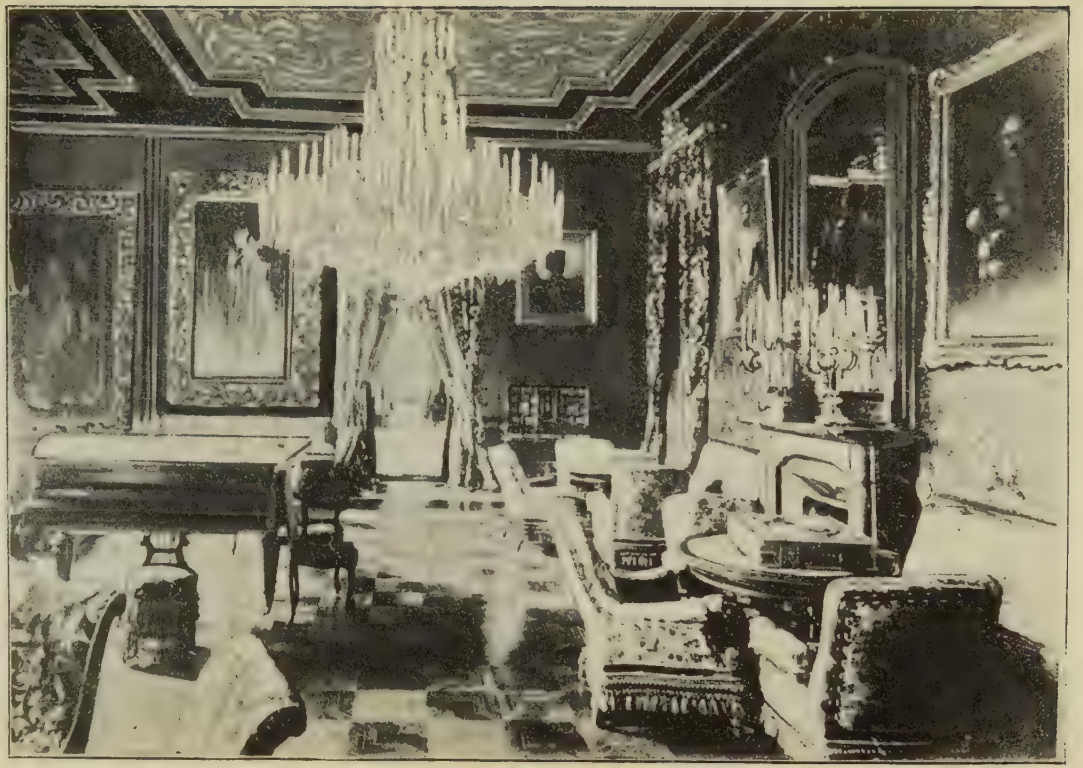
"I arrived," he writes, "by the steamboat from Semlin, and landed on the Turkish side of the Danube. On the bridge a guard-house was set up. Before it some soldiers in rags and tattered uniforms kept guard, smoking the while in a lazy fashion. In the guard-house—a pestilential hole reeking with a variety of bad odours—our passports had to be produced to receive the Turkish stamp or *visé*. Our

boxes were likewise opened, and their contents overhauled in a very unceremonious and uncleanly manner. The man who examined mine (which had the stamp of the Turkish General Consul in London) returned it to me with the fresh *visé*, at the same time holding out his right hand for a gratuity. 'How much?' I asked. He shook his head, murmuring something in Turkish which I did not understand. I asked again in Servian how much I had to pay, but receiving no answer, had to open my purse and let him take what he chose. I do not know even now what I ought to have paid him, but I do know that he took the whole contents of the purse."

Since Belgrade has returned to Servian rule these malpractices are completely at an end. Cleanliness and order reign; the streets are well kept; there are fine buildings, elegant hotels, cafés, shops, and houses of business. The Belgrade of to-day is a handsome city.

The position of the town is not only picturesque, but, as we have already said, favourable for the purpose of trading. Belgrade contains many buildings of antiquity, but the town itself is modern. The principal street extends to the extreme edge of the Save River. This quarter of the town used to be called the "Wasserstadt"[1]; it consists of only one street. Anyone who wishes to be acquainted

[1] We might translate this as "the riverside quarter."



Salon in the Konak.

with the most picturesque portion of Belgrade should visit the Save suburb. Here the traveller who has an eye for artistic grouping will be gratified by the pictures formed by the crowd of buyers and sellers. They gather outside their shops, and fill up the narrow street, speaking in every variety of Eastern and Western tongue. Their movements, their dresses, their Oriental appearance, have a bewildering and altogether novel effect, which is increased by the ceaseless traffic of steamers and sailing vessels passing along the banks of the river, and stopping to take up or discharge passengers. The going and coming never slacken from noon to eventide, and in one word, the animation and ceaseless change of this scene impresses itself for ever on the memory of those who have witnessed it.

On the opposite bank of the Save the Austrian shore extends along the great plain of Syrnicus, which on a hot summer day is wrapped in a blue haze. One can catch a glimpse in the distance of the many towers which adorn Semlin, and of the sketchy outline of the Gora Mountains still farther away.

As already mentioned, there are few public buildings in Belgrade. The palace, which was begun by Milan, and only lately finished, stands in a large park with extensive grounds, laid out in the style which prevailed in the reign of Louis XIV. of

France. The apartments in the royal residence are luxuriously furnished : everything bespeaks good taste. The audience chamber, the winter garden, and the three large reception-rooms, situated in the domed wings or corners of the building, deserve special attention. The first of these reception-rooms is in the Oriental style of decoration, the second in the rococo, and the third in the Renaissance. A fourth apartment, which lies farther back, and has, like the others, a vaulted ceiling, is the private chapel of the King, and is decorated in the Byzantine style. The cost of the palace amounted to 500,000 ducats, while that of the decorations exceeded 300,000.[1]

Much has been done towards the adornment of Belgrade since the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation. A former burial ground used by the Turks has been transformed into a large square (*velika pajaca* = great square). Here the eye falls upon the finely built high school, which a certain patriotic Major Mischa erected at his own cost, spending over 100,000 ducats upon it. In this building are also the Bureau of Instruction, the National Library, and the Museum. It is surrounded by a terrace, from which a striking view can be obtained over the town and its

[1] Models of foreign works of art are executed in Belgrade, as it is considered derogatory to the national self-esteem to employ foreign artists or to purchase their works.

environments, and the course of the Save and the Danube rivers can be followed.

In the neighbourhood of the old fortress we find the handsomest streets in Belgrade. Here are situated the foreign embassies and consulates, likewise most of the ministerial offices; the House of Parliament, or Senate House, which is in the direction of Topfschider; the military school or academy, and the immense barracks erected by Prince Milosch. Several houses, built with much elegance of design, and standing in magnificent grounds and gardens, give a great charm to this quarter of Belgrade.

Before concluding this sketch of Belgrade, we must pause a moment to say a word about the Konak, or castle, which, during the several centuries when wars without end devastated the country, played its part in the battles between the Christians and the fanatical Moslems.

The first time we hear of the fortress was when King Dushan encountered Ludwig I. of Hungary, and conquered him just outside Belgrade. Later on, after the successful battle of Kossowo, which secured the power of the Turks, the only spot of safety for the harassed and hunted people was the fortress of Belgrade, and here a brave defence was made against an overpowering enemy. From Belgrade we find the Christian army going out over and over again to do battle against the Crescent, in the hope of

staying its successful career. It was in the fortress that the celebrated preacher, Johann Capestran, by his eloquence, roused the people in Belgrade to sally forth against the infidel Turk.

It would take too long to recapitulate the various efforts made by the brave defenders of Belgrade to hold the castle. Once only did it fall into the enemy's hands, in 1521, when the Sultan Soliman succeeded in capturing it. This reverse was only temporary, the castle being retaken. After many vicissitudes more peaceful times dawned for Servia, and for the battered, defaced, and ancient castle. In 1862 the final struggle took place outside its walls.

CHAPTER III

THE reception of the newly married couple, as had been expected, was most enthusiastic. The young Princess had won all hearts by her girlish loveliness ; her attachment to the Greek Church and her Russian descent added much to her popularity, while the devotion of the young lovers to one another seemed a good augury for their domestic tranquillity.

Milan, for the first time in his life, felt himself thoroughly happy. He was resolved to break with all the relations which might in any way interfere with his domestic peace. He was the more strengthened in this resolution by the sweet tenderness with which Natalie listened to his story of his friendless, neglected childhood : with her hand in his, and a loving smile on her lips, she promised him that she would make up to him by her love for all he had suffered in those days of misery.

As this idyllic story of the young lovers' first days of happiness is unfolded to the reader, the wonder arises by what mysterious agency this early promise

was blighted and turned into the miserable tale we have to tell.

A German writer commenting on this problem says : " No one could have believed that this marriage, which was contracted from love and love alone, would have ended in so tragic a manner, or that Hate could have so quickly taken the place of Love." Milan and Natalie were equally to blame in bringing about this miserable finale. Each of them suffered terribly from from the consequences of their folly, though Milan was most in fault. But the blame rests, in the first place, on those who were Milan's nearest relations, and who should have guarded his tender age. It was his mother who allowed her only child to remain in 'the puddle of iniquity' at Prince Kusa's Court, imbibing through his childish senses the general corruption from which his youth should have been shielded. It was his guardian, Prince Michael, who sent the boy to Paris with a man of Huet's careless nature, which unfitted him to be the tutor of a youth of Milan's character. And from the time of his return to Belgrade, had it not been the aim of everyone about the Court to flatter the young Prince, and pander to the bad side of his nature and to his vices—to show him the worst types of men and women, and to do absolutely nothing to elevate or improve his moral nature ? And since his marriage, what had been the task of these so-called friends ?

To fill the mind of his young wife with distrust, to pour into the ears of a girl-bride the history of her husband's amours, to point out to her the heroines of those adventures, and to whisper odious suspicions of everyone about her Court; by this means causing her to withdraw from all intimacy with the women whose counsel and experience would have been of the utmost service in these early days when everything was strange, and she needed friends to help her to tread the difficult paths in which she had to walk. It is not surprising that at her age, and with her small experience of life, she should have allowed these so-called friends to fill her mind with distrust of her husband's friends and, worse still, with doubts of his love for her. This first beginning of distrust increased as years went by until the passionate love of the young bride was transformed into bitter dislike, which broke out into passionate reproaches and scenes of distressing violence that gradually destroyed all domestic happiness.

It would be idle at this distance of time were we to speculate upon what might have happened had the life of the wedded pair been cast in different lines. Neither does it now matter with whom lay the fault of the constant quarrels which had ended in a public scandal. The revelations of the Divorce Court in recent years have testified to the fact that the highest class can be as brutal, as quarrelsome, as

given to drink and to vice of all kinds, as the drunken loafer who knocks his wife about and turns her into the street in the night. Vice is common to all classes, and the passions of men and women are not regulated by the positions they hold ; nor will education or careful training always eradicate these tendencies in human nature. This is a mystery which is beyond the power of man fully to understand, and, not understanding, to bring under control like scientific or natural problems.

The reader has seen Milan's training, or want of training, when with his mother, the evil influence at Prince Kusa's Court, and the easy régime of Professor Huet. It may be doubted whether the course of education pursued by Huet was the best for a youth of Milan's character, but in any case, the circumstances which brought the young Prince at so early an age to the position he now held were to the last degree unfortunate so far as his future career was in question. If the early days of his childhood had been miserable, the first years of his new dignity had not been happy. It was a lonely life the boy-Prince had led in the gloomy castle of Belgrade. He disliked the men to whom the Regency was entrusted, and Ristisch he disliked most of all.[1] It has been said that Ristisch cared for nothing but his own

[1] Milan all through his life distrusted Ristisch. He considered him not only in the light of a personal enemy, but also as an enemy to

advancement to place and power, and his enemies have gone so far as to state openly that he knew of the attempt made by General Blanavatz to poison the young Prince in a cup of coffee, which by some fortunate mistake the General drank, and expired a few minutes later.

As money difficulties play a principal part in the unhappy story I have to tell, I think perhaps it would be well to give a short summary of the embarrassments which had already begun to arise in the royal household.

Prince Michael had inherited the large private fortune of Milosch, who not only had been a clever and energetic ruler, but had also administered the finances of the kingdom, as well as his own private means, with remarkable ability and prudence. He left to his heirs savings that amounted to millions of francs. Michael was equally frugal in his habits, and capable in his administration of his pecuniary affairs, and at his death his private fortune, which was considerable, swelled the previous savings of Milosch, and brought the total to a large amount. He had, however, neglected to name in his will the inheritor of this fortune. Therefore, soon after his death a family council was held in order to go into financial

Servia; and yet any dispassionate reader of the history of Servia must acknowledge that this was an injustice to the great abilities and generous efforts made by this able statesman.

matters; which council settled the question of the heir to this fortune according to what was conceived to be the intention of the deceased Prince. Besides his wife, the Countess Julia Hunjadi, with whom Michael had not lived happily, his sister Petria also survived him. There were likewise his nephews, Baron Feodor and Baron Nokilie, the sons of his deceased sister Elizabeth. These relatives, with a disinterestedness rarely to be met with, decided that the inheritance should go to Prince Michael's successor on the throne of Servia. They took this course not only out of affection for the deceased Prince, but also out of love for the glory and aggrandisement of Servia, and of its ruler, the young Prince Milan.

This formed an important addition to the Prince's privy purse. The savings during his minority were also very considerable, as was the interest from Prince Michael's fortune. In addition to this the Prince had certain rights, such as the fishing of the Danube, which produced an annual income. He likewise had Crown lands in different parts of Servia and Roumania, and there was also the Civil List, which reached the respectable figure of 1,200,000 francs. For a small and somewhat obscure principality such as Servia was in those days this income should have been all-sufficient.

There was no doubt that the young Prince in his first years of sovereignty was animated by the

best intentions towards his people. During these early days Milan presents a delightful picture of a youthful prince anxious to make his subjects happy, and winning their love and respect by his good qualities. Unfortunately, this early promise was not fulfilled. The visits the Prince paid to the various Courts of Europe had raised in his mind a desire to emulate their magnificence and luxury, and he also spent large sums on the improvement of Belgrade, making the fine streets, building the royal palace, and beautifying the city in every direction. All that is to be admired in Belgrade of to-day is Milan's doing. He was generous—extravagant is the better word—and much of the savings of his minority was lavished upon undesirable women, or scattered at the gambling hells. This inexperienced, generous-hearted, boyish Prince was fair game for the rooks to pluck. Poor Prince! His face would grow somewhat pale and his lips would tremble as he saw his vanishing pile of gold; but the demon of play had got hold of him, and stuck to him all his life long. He was powerless to control this familiar demon, and would stake his last guinea. And so it came at last that the large sum left by Michael, and so tenderly nursed by Ristisch, dwindled by degrees until it came to vanishing point.

Natalie's dowry of five million roubles, which was to

have been handed to the Prince on their wedding-day, had been invested instead in her name in landed property at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Milan, who at the time of his marriage was in love with his beautiful bride, would not listen to Ristisch's grave remonstrances as to the duplicity which had been practised, and the serious difference it would make later on when Milan would have to reckon with his creditors. He pointed out the expenses which the marriage had entailed, the lavishness of the wedding festivities at Vienna and the royal entertainments at Belgrade, and he asked how all this would be paid when the Civil List was so overdrawn. A fresh loan at exorbitant interest had to be got to pay the most pressing demands.

Milan now broached the subject of his disappointment as to the amount of her fortune to his bride, and suggested (we may be sure at Ristisch's prompting) that one or other of the Russian properties should be sold and the money realised given to his creditors, this being, as he urged, some amends for his disappointment. The Princess did not see the matter from this point of view. She declined, therefore, to be a party to the sale of the Russian property, preferring to keep it in her own hands. In this she probably acted by the advice of her father. In any case, prudence in money matters always distinguished Natalie, and during her short period

of domestic happiness she grasped the uncertainty of her position and made preparations for what might happen.

Any disappointment Milan may have felt at finding his wife so slow to assist him in his difficulties was soon forgotten in the joy he experienced at the birth of a Prince, and his joy was shared by the nation. If anything could make the youthful rulers of Servia dearer to the hearts of the people, it was this event. It should have drawn the youthful parents closer together. But here we enter upon a sad chapter of their lives, for this baby Prince seems to have been a cause of strife between the parents.[1]

It may be said to have been a foregone conclusion that the marriage between Natalie and Milan would be stormy. The union of a girl of sixteen with a man of Milan's unstable character was likely to turn out a failure. The continuance of even a short period of domestic happiness depended upon so slender a thread as the length of time which would elapse before the young wife's eyes were fully opened to her husband's weaknesses. Milan was a curious mixture of fine qualities, and of generous instincts overshadowed by lower tendencies. His personal attractions and a sort of *bonhomie* (there is no word in the English language that describes this quality) neu-

[1] Two more children were born later, both of whom lived only a few hours.

tralised to a great extent his serious failings, his selfish disregard for the feelings of others, and his indulgence in every passion which took possession of him, but he was a gambler, a spendthrift, and a dissipated man. These failings made him distasteful to a girl of Natalie's age and character, and his other qualities did not make up to her, as they might have done to one older, for the sufferings she endured at witnessing his admiration for other women, and for the jealousy which ate into her heart at knowing she no longer held the first place in his affections; thus the happiness which the birth of the infant Prince brought to the youthful parents was soon overcast.

One's heart goes out in pity for this young girl of barely seventeen, placed in so difficult a position, surrounded with intriguing men and women, each one an enemy in disguise, all ready to circulate stories, all eager to pull her down to their own level. It would have needed an older and a more prudent woman to steer her course through such a Court.

The first public quarrel between Milan and Natalie was brought about by his attentions to a young lady, Fraulein S——, a relative of Natalie's, who had given her the post of maid-of-honour at the Court. Fraulein S—— was a charming blonde and of a sprightly disposition; she amused and fascinated

the impressionable Milan, and his attentions excited Natalie's jealousy. As it happened, in this instance she had cause for complaint, which was not the case on many other occasions, when her jealousy was absolutely groundless.

Natalie had her clique of friends who championed her, so to speak. At the head of the list was the Prince's cousin, Konstantinovitch, who had been an aspirant for Natalie's hand in Paris. He was now married and held a post of importance at Court. He and his wife were in the inner circle of the Princess's intimates. Both husband and wife were young, pleasant, and perfectly harmless.

The same could not be said of a stranger who had arrived in Belgrade soon after the royal wedding. His name was Dimitri Wasseljevitch ; he was intimately connected with the Nihilist clubs and associations, and it was said that he was engaged in a plot to assassinate the Czar of Russia, in consequence of which he had taken refuge in Servia. Russia demanded that he should be given up. As, however, there was no proof that Wasseljevitch was engaged in any such conspiracy, the Servian Government refused to surrender the man.

Gortschakoff, the Russian minister, directed the Russian consul in Belgrade to demand an audience of Princess Natalie, and to entreat her to use her influence to obtain the surrender of Wasseljevitch.

The consul was received by the Princess, and after a lengthened interview, in which he reminded her of the promise she had given to be always the faithful servant of Russia, the Princess agreed to use her influence with the Prince to obtain what was required. Natalie found, however, that she had promised what she could not perform. Milan resisted caresses and endearments, and stood firm to his protection of Wasseljevitch. Natalie was deeply mortified. She had pledged herself, and she would have to acknowledge that she had neither influence nor power.

The most exciting scene followed. Natalie, abandoning entreaties, threatened, and even commanded, her husband to obey her. She gave way to a paroxysm of rage, and as is always the case when self-control is lost, said what she would afterwards have wished unsaid. On the other hand, Milan preserved his dignity, firmly refusing to permit any interference on the part of the Princess in political or other business appertaining to the government of the country of which he was sole Sovereign. Wasseljevitch remained in Servia, and Natalie had the mortification of acknowledging to the Russian Government her inability to influence State affairs.

This incident should have been a lesson to the young wife not again to run counter to her husband in matters so intimately connected with his rightful

Queen Natalie with her only Child, the late King Alexander.

page 86.

prerogatives. Unfortunately, however, youth is self-reliant; it rushes upon danger in every shape and breaks itself in vain against rocks with which it would be wiser not to come in contact.

Mention has been made of Monsieur Konstantinovitch and his wife, who were favoured with the friendship of Princess Natalie. This was very natural, as he had been a friend of her girlish days. Anyone conversant with the intrigue and jealousy which surrounds royalty will understand that the preference shown by the Princess to the Konstantinovies (husband and wife) made them the objects of jealous espionage and animosity. One of the offences committed by "the favourites" was their having a crest engraved on their carriage; it was said also that when travelling in other countries they wrote their names as *de* Konstantinovie, although in Servia no titles of nobility exist. Both husband and wife enjoyed a high position in the Court circle and were at the head of all social functions, being promoters of amusements in every form. It was Konstantinovitch who first inaugurated a club of racing and sporting men. One of the many outstretching meadows in the neighbourhood of Belgrade was chosen as a racecourse, made level and smooth, and enclosed with rude palings, which were painted in bright colours. The aristocracy came in their carriages, the people on foot. There was a music pavilion,

where the band played; drinks of every kind were sold to the crowd by vendors; on little stoves sausages were cooked, which, truth to tell, produced a far from agreeable perfume. In the place of what in England is called the judge's box there was a wooden table somewhat shaky about the legs, upon which a large cowherd's bell was placed. Behind the table stood the umpires. One of these took hold of the bell and rang it with all his might. One would have imagined it was a fire alarm, but the public knew it was to announce the start. Then came the jockeys (?) on their small but surefooted horses, followed by a motley crowd of riders—popes in their long soutanes, ragged peasants, respectable farmers, fine gentlemen in dress-coats and polished shoes, but destitute of *stockings*. The entire "field" shouted, screamed, or sang a sort of tune which ended in a shriek that was positively deafening. This shriek became general when the first rider, or winner, reached the post; the band blew a blast from the wind instruments, and the President of the race-course, accompanied by his wife or, in lieu, a lady of the Court, rose in his place and congratulated the winner on his triumph.

The mention of these races (which may have considerably improved since this account was written) recalls a terrible story which was told to the writer. It was in the year 1892 that a cavalry officer, whose

name was Lieutenant Tomie, had carried off the prize at the spring races. It would appear that this success had irritated his brother officers, who envied the young man, and were determined to make him suffer for his triumph. They proposed that he should spend his winnings in giving them an entertainment at an inn some distance from Belgrade and close to the Monastery of Rakovitza. Lieutenant Tomie at once agreed. He invited his brother officers, as well as some ladies and gentlemen moving in the best society of Belgrade. Having visited the monastery, the company repaired to the inn, where, according to the testimony of the innkeeper, scenes of revelry took place. After the ladies left, the officers remained drinking at their host's expense. Everybody, however, cleared out by midnight, Lieutenant Tomie being the last to leave, riding back to Belgrade alone. Early next morning the hotel-keeper from Rakovitza came, pale and troubled, to the police-station in Belgrade with the news that on his way to market at five o'clock he had found the corpse of Lieutenant Tomie lying on the road. At the inquest, in accordance with the testimony of the army surgeon, the cause of death was declared "accidental, owing to a fall from his horse." On the other hand, a number of civil surgeons maintained that the Lieutenant had been mortally wounded by a sharp instrument. It then came out that during the

evening the luckless Lieutenant had quarrelled with one of the officers of the party. Suspicion fell on this officer, who, it appeared, had left the party early in the evening so as to avoid suspicion falling on him. Suspicion, however, did attach to him as also to others of the company, and the whole affair implicated so many persons in good society, and disclosed so many compromising matters, that it had to be hushed up as quickly as possible. Numerous instances could be given of the very demoralised condition of society in Belgrade at the time with which we are occupied.

Having given my readers some silhouettes of Servian society, and some sidelights on the methods of the police, I shall conclude with a curious story concerning the methods of Post Office officials in Servia.

It was on December 19th, 1895, that the quick train from Constantinople steamed into Belgrade at thirty-five minutes past five o'clock a.m. This train brings the morning post, which is anxiously expected, especially by the merchants, who have heavy dealings with Turkey. The mails (letters, parcels, etc.) for the Post Office are consequently very large, and two officials are always waiting to receive the post-bags, which contain gold, notes, and paper. The bags are sealed, and being handed over to the officials, are carried by them to a van waiting outside.

One man drives the van, the other keeps guard over the bags till they are delivered to the head official of the Belgrade Post Office. On this occasion the driver's name was Antonio Stanjonavie, the other's was Stankovie; both had been many years in the postal service, and were considered to be unimpeachable both as to honesty and fidelity.

The post-car duly arrived at the Post Office; so did the two men. The post-bags were, however, missing, and the account of their disappearance, as told by Stankovie and Stanjonavie, was absolutely incredible. According to this wonderful tale, everything had gone on as usual until they reached a certain spot, where they were suddenly attacked by a party of Heydukes, who easily overpowered them and speedily rifled the post-bags of their contents, and then decamped. A search-party was despatched to the place described by the men, where they found the ground strewn with letters and postcards, as well as a number of postal orders to the amount of 137,400 francs. The ready money, amounting to £159,083, mostly in gold pieces, had disappeared.

The driver and postman were both placed under arrest, and it was speedily made clear that the story of the sudden attack made by Heydukes was nothing but a fabrication. Furthermore, it came out that both the men were in league with the watch who kept guard before the offices of the Finance Minister, and

that the robbery had been carried out with their connivance. When, later, it was proved that the Secretary and Chief Commissioner of the Post Office Department were implicated in the robbery, the investigation was suddenly quashed and nothing more was heard of the matter.

This curious incident excited considerable attention in all countries, the news reaching even to England and America.

"The Post" has always been held in reverence, letters and their contents being considered sacred, and travelling in safety by sea and land until far distant climes are reached. Therefore, when this story became public, a howl of indignation arose, everyone feeling that the affair was a personal one. Duels were fought and old friendships were broken up in consequence of the height to which party spirit rose.

CHAPTER IV

IN writing the story of Milan's reign it is impossible to ignore his long-continued struggle with the Radical party. It may be said that this struggle continued throughout his life. It lay in wait for him during his minority, and the very day he attained his majority it burst upon him in all its ferocity, setting itself to counteract all his projects.

What did the Radical party want? But before we answer this question we must put another. What does the Radical party *in Servia* want? The answer to this will take some space.

In the first place, the Radical party in Servia does not correspond with such a party as understood in other countries. To restore Servia to the position she held amongst nations at the time when the Emperor Dushan governed the country is the dream of the Radicals in Servia, and to this programme (unlikely as it is to be fulfilled) the people of Montenegro have likewise subscribed. It is a dream, and nothing but a dream; but it is a fine,

a noble dream, worthy of sympathy, and, although unlikely of attainment, it is a great incentive, and one cannot but admire it.

In this vision the kingdom which once belonged to Dushan appears to occupy a considerably larger area than the present Servia, including countries which have never really belonged to Servia, but over which the Servian standard waves in *imagination;* the truth being that Servia actually fills but a small space on the map of Europe; the black-and-yellow flag floats over one portion of it, the Turkish over a second, and between the two there is another Slav principality—Bulgaria. It would be difficult—nay, impossible—in such circumstances, to locate the great Servian Empire!

We are, however, *not* living in dreamland; neither were all the Radicals in Servia dreamers. There were many of them who cared little for the honour in glory of their country, and whose only aim in political life was to have the government in their own hands, and to pursue a very venturesome foreign policy—that of a close alliance with Russia and a declaration of war against Austria and Turkey. Fortunately the young King had by his side a man whose attachment to the House of Obrenovitch never faltered, and who gave the best efforts of his life to the service of the Prince, whom, at all events at this period, he loved as his own child.

Ristisch was a politician of a type now rarely to be met with. Some writers call him a splendid statesman, but nevertheless, his name is probably little known to the present generation. He attempted no *coup d'état*, nor ventured on the dangerous ice whereon so many politicians come to grief. Ristisch was twice Regent—once during Milan's minority, the second time during the minority of King Alexander. On several occasions he was Prime Minister; but all through his career his course was honourable: he did not seek to aggrandise himself, but gave his services for the good of his country and for love of his Prince. The latter could have had no better guide through the thorny path of political life.

In the beginning of Milan's reign the Radical party made approaches to the young ruler in the hope that he would accept their programme, but Milan had been too well trained by Ristisch to commit such a grave error; he threw aside the great Servian dream of impossible grandeur. From this time a rivalry arose between the House of Obrenovitch and that of Montenegro. The latter had always been hungering after the fleshpots of Servia, at the same time having a wholesome fear of being annexed by its more powerful neighbour. Prince Nicholas of Montenegro thought that his opportunity had arrived when Milan had snubbed the Radical proposals.

What the Radical party contemplated in secret Nicholas announced openly. He came forward as the protector and deliverer of the Balkan provinces. Nicholas, however, was not a Talleyrand, and his designs upon the Balkan were transparent. These designs, moreover, made little impression. Nothing daunted, Nicholas presently threw aside the mask he had worn with indifferent success, and declared boldly his intention of bringing Servia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia, and South Hungary under one head and ruler. It was easy to guess that this ruler would be Prince Nicholas, likewise that his ally in this precious scheme would be Russia.

The Radical section openly supported the Prince, who had subscribed to the programme which had been rejected by Prince Milan. Thus all those who were opposed to Milan could rely upon a hearty welcome from Nicholas.

The principal result of Prince Nicholas's mischievous interference, and the only reason why his name should be intruded on my readers is that he had accelerated the first outbreak of the people of Bosnia, who were suffering from the persecution of the Turks. This was in 1875, and the Servians, whose nature was chivalrous, petitioned their Prince to come to the help of the neighbouring State. The Skupshtina, when it met in September, 1875, endorsed

the wishes of the nation and demanded that war should be declared.

Milan, who foresaw the risk that such an undertaking would involve, declared against war. The force of events was stronger than individual opinion, and in consequence of this strength the wish of the people was at last accomplished. Following closely on Milan's refusal, a rising had taken place in Bulgaria and Herzegovina; this gave the Turks an excuse to order a general massacre. The indignation of Europe was now aroused; it was no longer possible for Milan to resist the indignation of the nation, and in June, 1876, he joined the allied army. The Prince was to accompany his troops, but the chief command was given to the Russian General Tcharnaieff. While the Montenegrins had occasional success, the Servians, who were not numerically strong, met with nothing but failure. The Turks, however, were far-seeing enough to recognise that it would be a difficult task to subdue men of such determination, endurance, and courage, who in face of tremendous odds had held their ground for more than seven months. Turkey, therefore, proposed an armistice, during which negotiations were begun with the result that, on February 28th, 1877, peace was concluded. The Porte signed an amnesty in favour of all Christians, promising that they should receive no molestation if

they returned to the homes from which they had fled.

The policy of Turkey is altogether opposed to international rights, neither do the Turks consider themselves bound to keep faith with Christians; therefore a treaty, were it signed by the Sultan himself, is of no value unless it should be in favour of Turkey, in which case it would be respected. This not being so in the present instance, the newly-made treaty was speedily broken through. Christians found no justice; they were put to death, imprisoned, robbed, persecuted, and all manner of outrage was inflicted upon them.

Russia was the first power that called Turkey to account for its bad faith towards the Christians, but the Sultan and his ministers loftily ignored these complaints. Russia was not likely to put up with this indifference from her old enemy, and at once made preparations for compelling the Turks to keep faith with the Christians, and war was declared.

In the opening of the campaign Russia had for allies Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Roumania. Turkey increased its military reputation, and the Turkish General, Osman Pasha, displayed great gifts as a commander.

Servia had at first held aloof. In fear and trembling the people had watched the struggle going on between Christian and infidel. At last Milan issued

a stirring proclamation couched in the following words :—

"The Porte, at the moment when she is hardly pressed by the army of one of the most powerful of nations, has adopted towards us so menacing an attitude as makes it impossible not to enter a protest which will bring to an issue once and for ever the question of our national independence. We Servians owe this sacrifice to ourselves and to the nation. This day we take up the arms we had laid down, and renew our fight for a holy cause, that of Christianity and our own independence."

The mobilisation of the Servian army commenced without loss of time, and the Prince placed himself at the head of his army as Commander-in-Chief. General Kosta Prostich exercised the functions of Chief Adviser and Major-General.

Milan arranged his army in two divisions, one of these being placed as a guard of observation on the frontier of Bulgaria. Milan, with the other division, penetrated into the province of Nish. There he divided his forces into two sections : one was to operate in the direction of Pirot, with the object of capturing the town, which had long ago been wrested from Servia by the Turks. The other section of the army, having first left a detachment to cover Nish, advanced resolutely towards Palanka, and on December 17th occupied Bahina Glava before

a body of two thousand Turks, which was sent to its help, could reach it. Another success followed almost immediately in the capture of St. Nicolas, a place of vantage situated on a hill.

On hearing of these successes, the Grand Duke Nicholas, who was in command of the Russian troops in Bulgaria, sent a despatch full of warm congratulations. The despatch was read to the victorious troops amid intense excitement.

The Prince now sent a section of his army to invest Ak Palanka, which was defended by two thousand Turks. Colonel Horoavitch executed this command with such promptitude and vigour that the Turks precipitately abandoned Palanka, flying in the utmost disorder to take refuge in Pirot. The troops, reinforced by the Choumadian regiments, followed up the victory by advancing on Pirot, which was a fortified town, and on December 28th, after a gallant fight, the garrison yielded to the impetuous attack of the Servians. The battle of Pirot, however, cost Servia 600 men. The Turks left to the victors 200 prisoners, 11,500 rifles, and 28 pieces of cannon.

While one division of the Servian army was having such good success, the other, under the immediate command of Prince Milan, passed the frontier on December 15th, and three days later was outside the walls of Nish, a fortified town with an important

fortress, or citadel, which was held by 7,000 Turks, with 200 pieces of artillery, of which some were Krupp's cannon. Although he had disposed his troops to the best advantage, Prince Milan did not begin the attack. He waited till a wing of the army which had just entered Pirot could join him. These troops arrived on January 5th. The attack was then ordered. Meantime Hafez Pasha, with a large army, was advancing to the help of Nish; he was already nearing Kourschoumlia, which had been occupied since December 26th by five Servian battalions. Milan despatched a detachment of the predatory brigands, of Morava, to waylay the Turks and harass their movements, so that the advance might be delayed.

On January 7th Milan began the attack on Nish. Nothing could have been better organised. Milan (who must have been aided by good counsel, for we know he was not by nature a good tactician) displayed extraordinary skill in the disposition of his army. The artillery and infantry attacked the fort of Goretza, while another section, although apparently aiding the attackers, advanced under cover of the fire on the central fortification. At the same time the Choumadian troops had taken possession of the heights of Grabovatz, while the Morava contingent on the north cannonaded the citadel of Nish.

The Turkish commander saw the danger of his

position, and, no doubt to gain time, sent to request an armistice, which was naturally refused. On January 9th Milan ordered a general attack, which began at three in the afternoon. At five the signal was given for the assault of Goretza Fort, which was taken at the point of the bayonet. At the same moment Rudink's brigade stormed the entrenchments of Grabovatz.

The Turks saw the futility of continuing a fight against such desperate men. On the morning of January 10th the garrison surrendered without any conditions, and the Servian flag floated over Nish, an event that had not been witnessed since the battle of Kossova in 1388.

The taking of Nish is one of the most glorious events in the history of Servia. It cost the lives of 1,000 brave men, but of the enemy 5,000 were taken prisoners, besides 200 pieces of cannon, etc.

On January 15th Milan made a triumphal entry into the town, amidst a wild scene of enthusiasm on the part of his troops.

Meantime Hafez Pasha—the same who had already scored a success as a general—came in all haste to the rescue of Nish. On his way he retook Kourschoumli from the Servian garrison. A brigade sent to its relief by Prince Milan made no impression, and it was only with the help of the Morava auxiliaries that on January 20th the Servians made good their

entrance into the town, which had been evacuated by Hafez Pasha. A frightful spectacle met their eyes. The heads of the unfortunate Servians who had garrisoned the town were fixed on spikes and decorated the entrenchments.

Milan now attacked the defiles leading to the fortress of Gredelitza, and which were held by 5,000 Turks. After a bloody combat the Turks were driven back to Gredelitza, where the fight was renewed the next morning and continued till six o'clock that same evening, when the victory was with the Servians, the Turks having to evacuate the place. After this defeat the Turks concentrated at Vrania, where they made a fierce struggle. The Servians were commanded by General Beli-Markovitch, and their position was at some moments most critical. They rallied, however, and, inspired by new ardour, performed, says the chronicle, "prodigies of valour." The day was theirs. The Turks understood that their position was hopeless, and during the night they evacuated Vrania, making good their retreat. A thousand nizams, however, who had delayed their escape until day-break, were made prisoners by the Servians, who had reason to congratulate themselves on their victory. They had, with 7,000 men, beaten 10,000 Turks.

The tired, exhausted army had yet more work to do. Under the cover of some successful skirmishes,

the Morava scouts managed to reach the entrenchments of the enemy at Samoko, which lay on the summit of a steep and thickly wooded height. The troops began the ascent at nine o'clock in the morning, and the attack at midday. The snow, however, fell so thickly that the Servians had to change their position, and as the snowstorm continued, the attack could not be resumed until February 2nd. Both sides fought vigorously. The battle began at seven o'clock in the morning and continued until the darkness of night set in, without either of the combatants being able to claim the victory.

The Servians spent the night on a bed of snow, waiting patiently for the early dawn to recommence the struggle, when towards midnight a messenger came panting up the hillside, bringing the news that an armistice had been declared at San Stefano.

In the early dawn the troops turned their faces towards the plains below Gredelitza. They had to regain the position they had occupied before they climbed the mountain side, where 400 of their number had found their last resting-place.

One month later, on March 3rd, the preliminaries of peace were signed, and with it were broken the last links of the chain which had once held Servia in cruel bondage to Turkey. The Treaty of San Stefano was a triumph of Russian diplomacy. By it the Czar became the head of the Balkan Peninsula, and the

Slav Princes of Servia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria were, if not tributary, in a measure dependent on him. Roumania, which was, so to speak, part and parcel of Russia, was completely under its influence, and the four dislocated provinces which still remained to Turkey were of little importance.

An indignant French writer declaims against the perfidy of Russia, who "trampled under her feet the treaties of 1856 and 1871, and lied to Austria, whose interests she had on several times sworn to protect, in place of which she inflicted a severe blow by obtaining for Montenegro a great portion of Herzegovina, in giving her a harbour on the Adriatic and other political advantages." England, likewise, had grave cause for complaint against Russia, her influence in the East being almost entirely annihilated. So far as Servia was in question, there was also cause for complaint, the Treaty of San Stefano giving a niggardly reward for the double campaign Milan had undertaken in the Slav cause. Servia acquired, it is true, the towns she had conquered, Nish and Leskovatz, but Russia at the same time planted beside her a dangerous neighbour when she reorganised Bulgaria, which, being a docile instrument in the hands of the Czar, could at any moment become a peril to Servia. It was therefore not surprising that the publication of the Treaty of San Stefano should have raised a storm of discontent. Every Power, with the

exception of Bulgaria and Montenegro, was in arms. Servia, who had expected to regain the whole of what is called Ancient Servia, had been put off with the moiety which she had gained by hard fighting, and even the towns of Pirot and Vrania, out of which her army had driven the Turks, and which were actually in her possession at the time the treaty was signed, were not allotted to her.

There was every reason for the great irritation which was aroused throughout all Servia. Prince Milan signed at Pirot and at Vrania addresses demanding the annexation of those districts which were rightfully his, and in his despatches to Belgrade he declared the Servians would not evacuate the two towns in question unless constrained to do so by force.

No nation was more indignant than England, who at once began preparations, both by sea and land, to force Russia to abandon the provisions of the obnoxious treaty. Russia, in truth, was weakened by her late war, and was in no condition to undertake fresh operations. The Russian Minister, Todleben, viewed the situation as serious; he advised the Czar to make concessions on a large scale, and his counsel was followed. On 3rd June, 1878, the Powers were invited to take part in a second Congress which was to be held at Berlin, June 15th.

As regards the settlement agreed on at this Con-

gress, we shall concern ourselves principally with what affected Servia. In the first place she was declared an independent kingdom; secondly, she was released from *all* tribute to Turkey; and, thirdly, she was to enter into occupation of *all* the towns she had conquered in the late war: this clause doing away with the injustice of the Treaty of San Stefano. She was, however, to be liable for the debt due to the Ottoman Government by the newly acquired provinces of Nish, etc., and likewise to undertake to construct a railroad through her new possessions.

Through all this tangled skein Servia owed much to the admirable steadiness of purpose shown by Ristisch, who with temper and calmness pressed the claims of Servia for just compensation for the services she had rendered in the war. Without his skill and temper Milan would not have come out of these different negotiations with even this measure of success. But the negotiations were not yet finished, as there was still the question of the rectification of the Greek frontier to be settled, and after this came that of what was called the "Ligue Albanaise," a league organised to oppose, by force if necessary, the occupation of the territories which belonged by right to Montenegro. This was followed by the question of the frontier of Roumania, and the condition of the Jews, which for years had been a source of trouble in this province.

Commissioners were sent by order of the Powers to investigate these matters, with the usual result in such cases of a delay of many weary months. Finally, the Treaty of Berlin was signed, but, as we shall see presently, it did not finally settle any of the points in dispute, which soon again coming to the front, caused considerable friction, ending in hostilities breaking out in different directions.

The peace, such as it was, did give to Servia a short space of tranquillity, during which she drew breath after the strain of the campaign. On the whole, the nation felt proud both of the army and of its ruler.

On February 6th, 1882, the Skupshtina, in full conclave, proclaimed Milan Krale, or King, of Servia, under the title of Milan the First. He had not quite completed his twenty-eighth year.

The formal recognition as a Royal House by different Courts of Europe took place without any opposition, and Milan's next step was to establish in every European capital a legation to represent the kingdom of Servia. France occupied his first attention, and thither he sent Monsieur Marienovitch, formerly Ministerial President and Grand Cross of the Order of Takova, to represent Servia. France returned this compliment by sending the Vicomte de Bresson, a distinguished officer, to represent her as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipoten-

tiary. The different diplomatists were instructed by their several Courts to arrange, on friendly terms, a treaty dealing with the commercial interests of Servia, which was to last ten years from the date of ratification. It was signed January 15th, 1883.

This was the halcyon period of Milan's reign, in which a promise of future greatness showed itself with a certain distinctness. We are told by several writers (and there seems no reason to discredit their statements, which are borne out by facts) that at this period of his reign the young ruler had at heart the desire to improve the condition of his people, and to work for the benefit of the kingdom over which he was called to rule.

The reorganisation of the army was his first care, and to this he gave earnest attention; but he likewise took measures for placing all the other branches of the administration on a different footing. New coinage was struck, and in place of the Austrian Arms or the Imperial Crown of Russia, which had figured on the gold pieces, there appeared a handsome presentment of Milan I. The postal system was taken in hand, and in all commercial affairs a satisfactory settlement took place. It is not necessary to enter more closely into the reforms which were undertaken by Milan. Unfortunately his attention was speedily distracted by other and still more important subjects.

The peace and plenty which had reigned for a short season in Servia were again to be disturbed. Agitators, encouraged by the Radical party and well paid by Garaschanin and his friends, went about the country telling the most shameless lies. Unfortunately Servia was credulous—a bad fault in either a nation or an individual. The Servians swallowed with avidity any reckless statement which tended to glorify themselves, and when they were assured that they had only to show themselves in their full strength, and that they then would subdue the Balkan provinces, they believed this foolish flattery. Just as the French in 1870 shrieked to be led to Berlin, so now, in 1885, the Servians, led by agitators, shrieked in their turn to be led to Sofia; they would listen to nothing but war to the knife with Bulgaria.

Servia and Bulgaria had never been friendly with one another. Jealousy lay at the root of this unfriendliness, both desiring to improve their position by the acquisition of the Balkan Islands. During the long years of miserable servitude to Turkey which Bulgaria and Servia had endured, the rivalry between the two States had sunk into abeyance, but no sooner had the day of freedom dawned than the old enmity broke out afresh.

The year 1885 ushered in a course of events which were destined to have grave consequences for Servia.

The first of these events was the insurrection in Bulgaria and Roumania. According to the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano, which was made more binding by that of Berlin, Bulgaria had been erected into a principality, over which the Sultan was appointed "suzerain," or guardian. It was likewise under the personal control of a governor, and a national militia was called into existence. The limits of Bulgaria were now (1885) definitely fixed. On the north they extended along the right bank of the Danube from the ancient frontier of Servia as far as Silistria, and from Silistria to a small commercial station on the Black Sea, called Mongalia. On the south the Bulgarian territory, starting from Eminch (on the Black Sea), followed the line of the Balkans until it rejoined the ancient frontier of Servia, not far from the town of Kustendel. In addition to fixing the limits within which Bulgaria was to confine itself, the Treaty of San Stefano likewise established in Thrace, on the south side of the Balkans, an Ottoman province, to which the name of *Eastern Roumania* was given. On the south this province was bounded by the Rhodopian Hills, and although it was placed under the administration of the Sultan, it was given a Christian governor.

Early in November of the year 1878 there had been signs of an insurrectionary movement in the province of Bulgaria, in which insurrection the hand of Russia

was evident. The Russian Press had trampled under foot the provisions of the lately made Treaty of Berlin, and instigated the Bulgarians to force the Sultan to restore Roumania to Bulgaria.

The Bulgarians, finding such support from a power like Russia, now proceeded to more extensive demands. These demands included Macedonia,[1] as it had been the cradle of their race, and likewise the province of Debroutcha, which was rich in all resources, specially cattle.

The situation was becoming grave, and there was no longer any idea of observing the Treaty of Berlin. Therefore, when it came to the evacuation of Eastern Roumania by the Russian garrison and its being handed over to the Turks, Russia, in view of the excited condition of the people, proposed that the province should be garrisoned by fifteen thousand men, to be furnished by those who had signed the Treaty of 1878. Turkey protested violently against this intervention, and in the end Aliko Pasha was made Governor of Eastern Roumania, while Bulgaria elected Prince Alexander of Battenberg, a young man of twenty-eight, nephew to the Empress of Russia.

Prince Alexander fixed his residence at Sofia. Great disturbances, however, followed his election.

[1] It is a curious coincidence that as I write, these troubles are again rising in the Balkan and specially in Macedonia.

It would take too much space were we to follow the story here; it is sufficient to say that the young Prince came out of his difficulties with flying colours. He had many of the attributes of an able governor and a good general, but it was some time before he was able to show clearly the stuff of which he was made. Russia had mistaken the character of the Prince, and looked upon him as a lay figure which they could set up to do the ornamental part of government. They had to repent bitterly of their mistake in thinking of Alexander as a mere automaton who could be pulled by a string and made to bow and smile to the people. There were many princes who would have been content to play this sort of rôle, but the Battenberg understood his duty as Prince and ruler in the true meaning of the word. At first he had been content to remain in the background—not because he was incapable of strong action, but because he was a slow though deep observer, who never took any step without well considering whither it would lead him. When the right moment came, and when he saw that the people had grasped their position, and recognised that the yoke which was pressing on their long-suffering necks was likely to suffocate them, then, and not till then, did he resolve to act. Now came the decisive moment for action; he seized the reins of government with the strong, nervous grasp of a determined

man, and throwing aside all fear of consequences, stood forth as leader of his people.

This step gave Bulgaria her freedom and shattered the power of St. Petersburg. It did not, however, escape considerable censure; it was denounced by many, roused great indignation, and was condemned on the ground of its apparent ingratitude towards Russia. Russian diplomacy, so tortuous in its secret windings, is difficult to fathom, and we can hardly form a judgment as to whether or not the action of Alexander was prompted by St. Petersburg.

The Bulgarians, emboldened by the success of their struggle for independence, now turned their attention to rescuing the fruitful province of Roumelia (which had once formed part of Bulgaria) from the oppression of the Turks.

They proceeded from secret agitation to overt acts. On December 15th, 1885, disturbances broke out in Eastern Roumania. Major Nicolief with his regiment had, during the night, surrounded the seat of government, and at three o'clock in the morning arrested General Deigaliki, who was on his way to the Governor-General, Gavril Pasha. The latter was also made prisoner and forced into a carriage, where was seated a woman dressed in red, holding a drawn sword in her hand, and in this manner the Governor drove through the town escorted by an armed crowd. Some hours after he was taken to

Cornare, where he was buried alive. The other members of the Council had taken refuge at the Russian consulate. The leaders of the reactionary movement then proceeded to the Municipality, where the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumania was proclaimed and a provisional government was established.

Prince Alexander found himself face to face with two alternatives—either he must place himself at the head of the national movement, ready to stand or fall with his people, or he must confide in the support of the Powers. In this latter way he might, perhaps, save his throne, but he would alienate for ever the hearts of the greater portion of the Bulgarians. Alexander took little time to consider. He at once threw in his lot with that of the people. He was clear-sighted enough to grasp that by this decision he had the guidance of the future campaign in his own hands, and would be able to enlist the sympathy of Europe in the cause for which he and his people were fighting. The event showed that in taking this wise and courageous step Alexander had acted with far-seeing prudence. On September 19th the mobilisation of the Bulgarian army began, and on October 2nd Alexander made his entry into Philippopolis, where he was proclaimed Prince. The Courts of Europe, with the exception of St. Petersburg and Vienna, were taken by surprise

at this step—a surprise that was anything but agreeable.

In Servia it produced intense excitement, but little admiration. Servia and Bulgaria had never been on good terms; like cousins, they knew too much of each other, and had that jealousy which often is found in close relationship. Instead of applauding the spirit and courage of Bulgaria, Servia showed the jealousy which was at the root of their dislike.

"There is an unanimous desire not to remain spectators of what is taking place in Bulgaria," writes the Marquis de Reverseaux,[1] who adds that "on no account could Servia permit Bulgaria to extend her dominion. Already the Servian frontier has been invaded by Bulgarians, and the Government has sent two batteries of artillery and two battalions of infantry to guard it."

On September 22nd Milan, who had just returned to Belgrade, made an official declaration to the European Powers that if the *status quo ante* in the Balkan Islands was interfered with or destroyed he would claim for Servia an addition of territory equal to that which Bulgaria had claimed. He added to this plain speaking "that he was mobilising his army in order to be ready for any eventuality, but as he did not wish to embarrass the action of the

[1] Representing French interests at the Servian Court.

Powers, he would restrain all popular manifestations as much as possible."

Everywhere there was agitation and excitement, and that feeling of tension that precedes some event that may change the face of existing circumstances. In such cases it is a relief when suspense is over and the definite has succeeded to imaginary speculations.

CHAPTER V

MILAN had this same year taken Milutin Garaschanin into his confidence. Garaschanin, it will be remembered, had made a bid for the throne of Servia, and seems all through Milan's reign to have been his evil genius.

Garaschanin, who represented the Radicals, or party of progress, had for his pilot in the political ship a *protégé* of Natalie, Minister Pirochanitz. This man had shown great skill in steering the political barque through stormy waters, and, probably by the wish of the Queen, had anchored, at least for a while, in the Russian harbour, where (through the protection given by the then powerful Czar of Russia) the said ship was safe from danger. But after Pirochanitz had suppressed a Radical outbreak with extreme severity in October, 1883, the pressure brought to bear by Austria was too strong for him, and he had to resign.

Garaschanin, who succeeded him, believed that the best way to secure his position was to engage the country in what he thought would be a "frivolous" war with Bulgaria, and for this purpose he infused

into Milan's mind a jealous dislike of Prince Alexander of Battenberg. He was always bringing forward the danger of such a neighbour, and he played cleverly upon Milan's jealousy, and inflamed him with hatred of the Battenberg.

In secret conferences the war was decided. Natalie was the only one who raised a warning voice. One of those who were about the Court at this period relates how the Queen implored Milan not to engage in this war. Her words were prophetic.

"Draw back, Milan, and have no share in what will prove a bloody drama. You have no chance of conquering, for Alexander is made of the stuff of the Hohenzollerns. He has been trained to war in the same school as those glorious warriors who have carried all before them."

I do not know what my readers will think, but to my mind these words would seem more provocative of war than peace. Natalie must have known the weak points of Milan's character, his egregious vanity and self-esteem, and by her praises of his rival she roused him to the very step she appeared to deprecate.

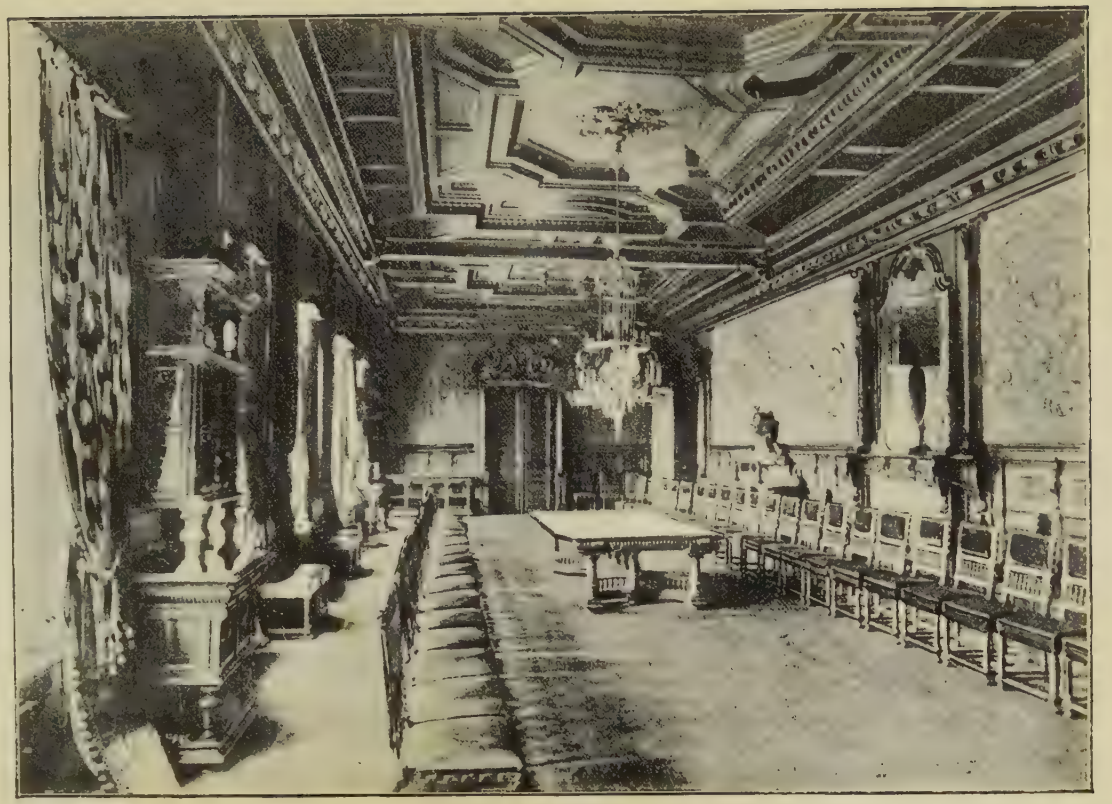
Natalie's enemies have always maintained that on her shoulders lay the blame of the Bulgarian campaign, and her conduct in this matter has been compared with that of the Empress of the French, Eugénie, who in 1870 induced Napoleon III., then, apparently,

at the height of his power, to engage in the disastrous Prussian war.

The comparison between the mental qualifications of the Empress Eugénie and Natalie is all in favour of the latter. It was Natalie's sound judgment which enabled her so to gauge Milan's military capabilities as to foretell his certain defeat if he engaged in a struggle with Bulgaria. No dispassionate reader will for a moment credit that she could have been actuated by so fiendish a motive as the wish to urge him on to his destruction, even supposing that she was a Russian agent.

Nothing had been decided when Milan travelled to Nish to open the Skupshtina. As he drove through the streets he was followed by the acclamations of the crowd. Speeches were made at the railway station applauding the war and calling on Milan to keep to the policy of his ancestors. The crowd cheered the speakers; the air resounded with "Vivas!" Milan, however, came to no decision on this occasion.

This reluctance on his part was not, as was said, a proof of cowardice, but, rather, of good sense, of which Milan had a fund, on which, unfortunately, he very rarely drew. A member of the Liberal party made the King a lengthy harangue, in which he reminded him of the valour of his ancestors, and exhorted him to follow in their footsteps. Milan replied that if he found it impossible to obtain by



peaceful means the *status quo ante*, he would promise not to re-enter his capital until he had obtained a substantial increase of the Servian territory; and if the result should not answer his expectations, he would, in any case, have the consolation that he had done his duty. The enthusiasm raised by his words was universal. At this moment he touched the highest point of his popularity.

The Skupshtina separated on October 4th, having voted unanimously for everything which had been proposed to it.

Milan's strange preoccupation and evident distaste for the prospect of war impressed Mons. de Reverseaux, the French Ambassador, very strongly.[1]

The imminence of the conflict was plain to every observer. At the frontier the Servian and Bulgarian troops were only two hundred yards from one another, and the sentinels on both sides had orders

[1] "The King," he writes to his Government, "is strangely preoccupied. He dislikes the mobilisation of the army, especially in this hurry. The expense of provisioning an army of 60,000 men is a heavy burden on such a country as Servia, which is already heavily burdened with national debt. In addition to this fact there are the probable losses which follow always in case of war, and which a country like Servia cannot bear like other countries. All business is already stopped. Agriculture suffers, for there is no one to till the land. Trade and finance are suspended, as is also all business, either of the State or otherwise. Such sacrifices can be borne for a short time, but if there is to be a long period of such, there will be discontent and all manner of trouble, loss of property, and general privation."—*Despatch of Mons. de Reverseaux to the French Republic at Berlin, London, and St. Petersburg.*

to shoot whoever tried to cross the line, whether he was armed or not. Milan, it was said, refused to receive an envoy from Prince Alexander, and on October 25th gave the final order to the troops to force their way into Bulgaria, but again recalled the order on hearing of the Conference at Constantinople.

Another fortnight dragged its slow length along while the wearied troops remained stationary, watching each other's slightest move. Finally, on November 15th, M. Garaschanin brought to the knowledge of the Powers that the Bulgarian troops had attacked at seven o'clock in the morning the position occupied by the 1st, or King's Regiment, which was encamped on the Servian territory in the neighbourhood of Vlasinna, and that regarding this aggression as being of the nature of a declaration of war, he had notified to Sofia that the kingdom

"Already a change is beginning to take place, especially in the army, which now displays considerable lassitude, and the enthusiasm which marked the first days of the campaign has given place to a wish to get back to family life and quiet. The outlook on the financial side is equally bad. The bankers, who had arranged a loan of twelve millions, of which they have only paid three, are evidently uneasy, and make no secret of their right to refuse the advance of the nine millions which are still unpaid. The situation is very serious, and I do not see a favourable outlook. The King's ministers are all agreed to wait a few days for the decision of the Conference of Constantinople, and if matters are not favourable to the interests of Servia, they will advise the King to withdraw his troops. An easy pretext could be found in the Montenegrins."—*Second letter of M. de Reverseaux.*

of Bulgaria should consider itself in a condition of war dating from Saturday, November 14th, six o'clock a.m.[1]

The very same day King Milan left Pirot, where he had been staying, for Nish, and proceeded to the

[1] Partly to distract his mind from his domestic unhappiness, as well as from the difficulties of government, Milan, during the Bulgarian war, indulged in orgies which, according to accounts given by those who took part in them, were of a scandalous and most unseemly character. We quote from the entries made by an officer in his diary. He was a friend and favourite of the King, and was one of his aides-de-camp during the campaign. Some quotations from his diary will interest the reader.

"NISH, *November* 18, 1885.

"Our troops continue to retreat. It is said King Milan will fix his camp at Pirot. Shall we have such fun there as we have had here? I never imagined a campaign could be so jolly. We do nothing but sing, dance, and fiddle. For the rest we are bound to win. Our generals seem certain we shall take Sofia without a shot being fired. We live here like fighting-cocks: there is no stint, even in champagne. Yesterday the King had some guests, and the champagne literally flowed. We had the Belgrade singers, who used to delight us in the theatre café. They sang and danced delightfully. But we are going to have something even better. The King has engaged national singers from Budapest and Vienna. They will be here in a few days."

This lamentable state of things prevailed all through the army, for from Pirot we hear pretty much the same story.

"PIROT. [No date.]

"All goes well. Our troops press forward with extraordinary energy and quickness. The King, however, will probably remain in Pirot, where the life in camp is much jollier than it was at Nish. The last two days we have had plenty of fun, and yesterday a lot of jolly girls came to enliven us. . . ."

The pleasant enlivenments, however, soon came to an end, and were succeeded by terrible scenes of carnage.

camp, where he took supreme command of the troops. In his address to the army he put forward all the reasons which had forced him to undertake this war, ending with these words :—

"The cause we fight for is a just cause : it is now to be decided by the force of arms and by the Almighty will and the powerful protection of God. In addressing my beloved people on this solemn occasion I put my confidence in their love for their country and their devotion to the cause for which we fight. "MILAN I.

"NISH, *November 15th*, 1885."

The first shock of the contending armies took place in the early morning of November 16th at Slivnitsa, which is on Bulgarian territory, but not more than half a mile from the Servian frontier. The Bulgarians repulsed the Servians with loss, but in spite of this, Prince Alexander telegraphed to Sofia :—

"The Servians are being reinforced. I fear I shall be obliged to retire upon Sofia. Place the archives in a place of security."

This telegram had hardly been despatched when the tide of success turned in favour of the Bulgarians, the Servians being driven back with great loss. Still, they fought bravely on, till night fell. The fight

was renewed in the morning, when it was found the Servians had taken possession of the heights of Nischava. From here they could send a raking fire into the Bulgarian troops, which, by Prince Alexander's orders, had to storm the hill. As they ascended, man after man fell dead, but the orders of the Prince could not be disobeyed, and the hill was taken. The Servians knew their last hour had come when they saw the first Bulgarian in front of them. They were killed to a man by bayonet thrust and gunshot wounds, for the Bulgarians were unmerciful.

There was only one chance of escape, and that by a mountain torrent dangerous to ford. Milan's troops had to choose between certain death by the bayonet or possible death by drowning. The slaughter was terrible, and caused an indescribable panic. Harassed on all sides, but still fighting bravely, the remnant of Milan's army retreated upon Tzaribord, pursued by the enemy and still losing heavily. Sixty prisoners were taken, and M. Stambouloff telegraphed to Sofia that not a Servian was left in the Bulgarian territory.

Milan had to yield to the pressure brought to bear by the Powers, and ordered hostilities to cease. The Bulgarians, however, refused to follow his example, saying plainly that they had received no orders from their Prince to cease hostilities, and consequently could not stay the march of the troops across the

Servian frontier. "Forward, brave Bulgarians!" cried Colonel Necolieff to his regiment; "give no quarter to an enemy who has attacked us in so cowardly a manner!"[1]

The question here arises, Had the Servian army degenerated, or was it less ably officered than was the Bulgarian? It may at once be conceded in answer to this question that had Milan not taken the full command, the issue might have been different, for his early want of military training showed itself distinctly.

But, putting this aside, there were other causes to account for the Servian defeat. Their leaders were many of them half-hearted, and none of them

[1] It is well at this point to quote a letter of the French Ambassador resident at St. Petersburg to his Court:—

"The irruption of the Servian army into Bulgaria has given rise to great discontent here. On the other hand, the success of the Bulgarian army has given great satisfaction. Monsieur de Giers was at great pains to explain to me this morning that the Bulgarian army was their (Russia's) creation, that it had been taught by their military *instructors*, and that all the Bulgarian officers were trained in their military colleges and academies: that, in fact, the tactics of the troops were identical with the tactics of the *Russian troops*. And this is the reason, he added, that the Bulgarians were able to resist and conquer the Servians, although numerically inferior to them."

Milan did not reach the battlefield to take command of the army until the battle of Slivnitsa had begun. He had gone, it was said, to visit a lady with whom he was carrying on a flirtation, and had left no address where he could be found. That Milan was in Nish is proved by the signature to his address to the army on the 16th, but the rest of the story is manifestly an exaggeration. For the rest, Prince Alexander did not take the command of the Bulgarians till the 16th, arriving from his headquarters on the morning of that day.

were trained or experienced generals ; the equipment of the soldiers was also sadly below the mark. The guns used by the men were old-fashioned and almost useless. The field-pieces were equally defective, while on the other hand the Bulgarians were well provided in all these respects : their field-pieces were of the newest kind, the ammunition of the best, the troops were well officered, and the officers were organised and assisted at every point by Russians. On the other hand, Austria, who was avowedly the ally of Servia, limited her assistance to declaring that she would hesitate to acknowledge the union of Roumania to Bulgaria unless guarantees were given that Servia should receive compensation.

The Servians still hoped that luck would turn, and that the honour of Servia would be saved. Unfortunately, this hope was vain, for a few days saw the army in full retreat, and it was an open question whether their frontier would not be menaced. It was, in fact, no longer doubtful as to who should dictate terms of surrender, King Milan or Prince Alexander.

That these events did not happen was due to the intervention of the Powers, who bestirred themselves to bring about a conference which would lead to peace. It was long before the terms could be finally settled. The Prince of Bulgaria published a manifesto

to the effect that after a truce of twenty-four hours hostilities should be resumed. This was objected to by the Powers, who constituted a military council which was to meet at Vienna and settle the technical conditions of an armistice. After much delay and many *pourparlers*, these conditions were signed on December 21st, the principal conditions being that a treaty of peace should be made which should last till March, 1886, that both armies should evacuate without delay the territories which they now occupied, and that the prisoners on both sides should be sent back at once.

As soon as this treaty was duly signed Milan disbanded the first division of his army, thus giving a proof of his desire to conclude peace. On December 20th the Servian authorities took possession of Pirot. They found a disastrous spectacle—houses in ruins, sacked from roof to cellar, many of them burned to the ground, and churches dismantled.

In reviewing the events of this campaign, it is not difficult to decide upon whom lay the blame for the unfortunate issue. In the early portion of this narrative there has been mention of the mistakes that were made in the education of Milan, and special attention was drawn to the deficiency in his military training, which had been entrusted to Professor Huet, who knew nothing of military tactics. In addition to this grave error, it would

seem that the King was lacking in military ardour, rather from temperament than from education. One would not like to go so far as to say he was a coward, but he shirked personal service, and a general or commander who will not lead his troops and share their danger cannot expect that they will rush to the cannon's mouth of their own accord. There is nothing more catching, or, as we might say, *epidemic*, than courage, and one has only to read the story of the Indian campaign, where our troops behaved so splendidly, in order to recognise the truth of this contagion of bravery. There is nothing on record more splendid than the relief of Lucknow. On the other hand, a timid or weak-kneed leader is doomed to failure.

Want of the knowledge of military tactics was, however, not the worst fault Milan possessed. There is ample proof in the history of this lamentable campaign to prove that the King gave his army the most demoralising example. I have already quoted, with considerable excisions, extracts from the diary of a young officer who served through the campaign of 1885 on the personal staff of Milan.

If Milan, however, failed in his duty, this could not be said of Natalie, who did her utmost in giving help and maternal care to the wounded and dying soldiers. A body of admirable nurses trained by

the Queen were ready to attend the sick and dying, supplies were forwarded with the utmost regularity, and the most careful supervision of every detail was given by Natalie, who, with her attendant ladies, spent her time in making comforts of all kinds for the sick and wounded.

When the first batch of these poor fellows arrived in Belgrade, Natalie, accompanied by her ladies, met them at the station, although the train arrived in the middle of the night and in the most inclement weather. The tenderness of her reception and the words of consolation she spoke cheered the sinking hearts of the poor sufferers. Nor did her kindness stop here. It was her daily duty to visit the military hospitals, to sit by the bedside of the wounded, to console the suffering, to pray with the dying, and to see that every man was provided with the necessary food and medicine. She spared neither money nor personal labour in the service of the wounded, and there was but one opinion throughout all Servia about Queen Natalie—she was "an angel of mercy."

Milan made his entry into Belgrade on January 4th, 1886. He was received at the station by the Queen, the ministers, the different officers of State, and the Municipal Council; at the same time addresses of welcome and renewed loyalty were presented. The King, who was evidently touched,

responded cordially, and his response was received with enthusiasm.[1]

The first and somewhat unpleasant business of settling the articles of peace had now to begin. The King recalled Monsieur Myatovitch from London, where he was representing Servia, and entrusted to him the duty of arranging the terms with Turkey and Bulgaria. Turkey was represented by Mujid Pasha, and Bulgaria by Monsieur Guechef.

It was a protracted and tiresome conference, the business dragging its slow length along and being constantly interrupted. At one period it seemed likely that hostilities would recommence; Servia, in fact, began concentrating troops on the Bulgarian frontier, and other preparations were made.

Prince Alexander of Bulgaria announced that he was about to mobilise the army, and recalled all officers who were on leave.

The Powers, however, who all through treated Bulgaria and Servia like children, put down their foot very decidedly on any more fighting between the naughty boys, and coolly announced that "peace was re-established between Servia and Bulgaria, and that the treaty would be signed at Bukarest," this

[1] Milan, in spite of his failure as a commander, was not wanting in courage. He showed considerable "pluck," if we may use the word, when the mob gathered outside the palace, calling for him to come out that they might kill him. He came out, calmly began to speak, and in two minutes the same people were cheering him wildly.

last being a salve to the injured dignity of Turkey. In consequence of this announcement the treaty was signed on the 3rd of March. The King of Servia, by sticking obstinately to his point, managed to escape paying Bulgaria any indemnity whatever.

There never has been a peace which took so long a time to arrange. On the other hand, diplomacy never showed itself so unselfish as it did on this occasion. It would be unjust to pass over in silence the unusual generosity displayed by the greater Powers of Europe towards their weaker neighbours, whose interests they guarded in a paternal manner. Monsieur de Freycinet draws attention to the action of France, which was specially to be commended, as she had no personal interest on either side of the question, and yet her agents in Sofia, Belgrade, and Constantinople made every effort to prevent hostilities breaking out. Bulgaria had come off triumphant, and gained what she wanted, the Government of Roumania being handed over by the Sultan, April, 1886.

Servia, who had suffered most, and had received no advantages, had now to repair her losses and re-establish her reputation. Unfortunately, a condition of great unrest prevailed all through the country. It was only natural that the nation should resent what had led to the defeat of Slivnitza. The stories which were circulated about the causes of that dis-

astrous failure raised the indignation of the people, and Milan's popularity sank to zero. Many writers assert that at this very time Milan expressed a wish to abdicate. He appeared exhausted, discouraged; his hands felt like ice; he could hardly articulate. He was filled with suspicion of the Queen and of his ministers: he trusted no one. Garaschanin was resolved that Milan should not resign. Sooner than allow him to take the fatal step of abandoning throne and country he would have confined him in the Castle.

"The consequences of the unfortunate war of 1885 were far-reaching. In the domestic life of the King and Queen they worked with disastrous effect. The Queen grew more and more excitable and nervous; scandalous quarrels between the royal couple were the order of the day. Milan made no secret of his domestic unhappiness; he told it to everyone who came in his way. His absences from Belgrade became more and more frequent. He fled to his friends in Hungary, or visited the castles of some of the wealthy magnates, and when in Belgrade spent his evenings at the houses of the nobility or of the foreign ambassadors. Amongst these he especially favoured the German Ambassador, Count Bray-Steinberg, likewise the French Ambassador, Monsieur Millet, whose wife was a *spirituelle* and altogether charming Parisienne. With the officers of the Castle

Guard he drank cognac and played cards. The Queen's anger and excitement at these absences he treated with the utmost indifference."

Did Natalie remember, now that the dream of early youth was realised and that the diadem of a Queen adorned her charming head, how in the days which seemed so far away—the days of her simple early girlhood—she had met a gipsy woman in the woods of her father's estate near Moscow? The woman was no common gipsy; her stately form and inspired expression thrilled the young girl, who submissively held out her hand, trembling the while, to hear what the future was to give her. The woman looked earnestly at the white, girlish hand, then suddenly bent her knee and kissed the hem of the young girl's dress.

"Why do you do that?" said Natalie, trembling, she knew not why.

"Because I salute you as the chosen bride of a great lord. Over your young head I see a crown floating in the air; it descends slowly—lower, lower; it touches your head. A great brilliance adorns this crown; it is a royal diadem."

The woman was silent, while Natalie, clapping her hands eagerly, cried—

"Go on, go on! What else? Tell me more!"

"Can I tell you more than that you shall be mother of a royal race?"

"I shall be the mother of a royal race!" repeated Natalie. "Oh, good gipsy woman, tell me more! What will *he* be like?"

"I do not know," replied the gipsy slowly. "I see no more. But wait a minute; let me look on your left hand."

The young girl eagerly complied with the demand; her frame was quivering with excitement.

The gipsy's face wore a curious puzzled expression.

"I do not understand," she said slowly. "You will be a Queen and mother of a King, but then——" She stopped.

"But then what, good mother? Go on, please, go on. You shall have this!" And she held up a gold coin.

Thus adjured, the gipsy continued slowly—

"I see a large house, a splendid dwelling. You shall be there; but take care, you will be turned out by force." Then she stopped, adding, "Now give me my guerdon and let me go."

It was many years since that prophecy had been made, and there can be little doubt it had its share in shaping the course of Natalie's life. And now perhaps the warning dwelt more in her mind than the reality which she had already grasped. The first part had all been realised; what about the second? Natalie tried to put these thoughts away,

and with youth to aid her she had many pleasant hours. There had been disappointment, no doubt; but still she was a Queen.

Reading as best we can through this human document, we must, I think, come to the conclusion that Natalie was not always judicious in her handling of a character such as Milan's. I think this will be made evident through the further development of this sad story. It would strike any observant reader as very probable that, had Milan married a woman of an altogether different character, less clever, but more submissive and more tactful—(Natalie was undoubtedly wanting in this quality, which is the great factor in married life),—and if Natalie had studied her husband's character, much of the notorious unhappiness which marked the married life of the Servian King and Queen would have been avoided. Milan was not to be driven, but he would (at all events, in the beginning) have yielded to the persuasions of a loving wife. This, however, is a delicate subject, and it is hard to say exactly how far a woman should yield. There are wives who, like Caroline of Anspach, are endowed with the art of feigning submission, and who get their own way by a course of tortuous deception. Caroline of Anspach was a past mistress in this art, and by her pretended submission and gross flattery gained unlimited influence over her selfish and weak-natured

Consort, who saw only through her eyes, and took no step of importance without her consent. Natalie, secure in her youth and beauty, and proud of her mental gifts, would never have degraded herself to the level of Caroline. She wished to be Queen of Servia not in name only, but *de facto*. It is to be feared that this desire, which would be commendable in a mind full of plans and aspirations for the benefit of others, was not altogether so high-souled as some writers would try to make out.

There can be, I fear, little doubt that much of the young Queen's desire to be initiated into political matters was prompted by Russian influences. I do not for a moment wish to cast any slur upon Natalie, or to suggest that she acted a dishonourable part by betraying any political secrets; but without any touch of dishonour she may have had a strong bias towards her own nation. Natalie's was not a nature which loves or hates by halves. She loved her own country, as do most Russians, with a love quite on different lines from our patriotism. The Englishman loves England, will make sacrifices for its sake, but in most cases draws a line. It is not every Englishman who will die for his country; at all events, he has free will in the matter. The Russian has none. Life in Russia is of small consequence when put in the scale with the furthering of political schemes, and it is well known that from

childhood the Russians are drawn into the political net from which they can never extricate themselves. "Natalie Ketschko is a good Russian." That was the text of the secret despatch sent to St. Petersburg before her marriage, and there is no reason to doubt that she was true to the character given of her. She loved the land of her birth, where dwelt her father, mother, sister, and all of her kith and kin. In her relations with these dear ones she may have occasionally forgotten that although Servia was not their country, it was hers by adoption. I draw attention to this probability in order that my reader may better understand what led to so lamentable an issue, and not confound the domestic friction with the political situation. Both played a part in bringing about the final result, but the two causes of disagreement were quite distinct from one another.

At the Easter reception of 1887 a great scandal occurred. It was usual on these occasions for the Queen to kiss the wives of the foreign diplomats and high officials: when on this occasion the wife of a Greek diplomat in the Foreign Office approached to receive the *salute courteous*, the Queen turned her head away, and although reminded by the chamberlain, refused the usual salute. Everyone present knew the reason for this insult was the attention the King had paid to the pretty Greek. Milan injudiciously came forward to champion his friend, and

indignantly remonstrated with Natalie on her coldness towards Madame G——. This only made the insult more marked, for the Queen replied by an attack upon the lady's conduct. (There is another version of the same story, in which it is said that Natalie gave her pretty rival a slap on the face.) This unfortunate circumstance greatly accentuated the friction and had a share in bringing matters to a crisis.

Natalie had of late (perhaps influenced by jealousy and anger against her husband) thrown herself into politics, her aim being, it is said, to be made Regent. She soon found friends and supporters amongst the enemies of Milan, who were actuated by a fierce hatred towards the occupant of the throne. These all gladly accepted Natalie's programme, and the situation grew every day more serious.

The outside world, which knew practically nothing of the real causes of estrangement between the husband and wife, was bound to invent a reason. The Radicals, who had everything to gain by lowering the character of Milan, dressed up a story of an injured wife and a brutal, dissipated husband. On the other hands, as we have seen, it was suggested that Natalie was ambitious, and that she wished to be made Regent. It was known in political circles that the Russian Ambassador, Persiani, believed in Natalie's diplomatic gifts, and wished to make of her a second Catherine

of Russia. It seems almost impossible to believe that her aim was to force Milan to abdicate, and one is inclined to discredit the sources from which this accusation comes. Natalie had no doubt suffered cruel disappointments, and endured many wrongs such as a woman of her proud nature does not easily forgive.

The defeat of Slivnitza put an end both to Garaschanin's personal popularity and to the party of which he was leader. Another party now arose who chanted a hymn of future triumph, foreshadowing the near approach of a day when Servia would shine out as a great kingdom, when the army would have its revenge and triumph over Bulgaria, and when each day would strengthen the position and add to the glory of the nation. Milan was not so silly as to believe one syllable of this programme of impossible events, neither had he the slightest confidence in the apostles who delivered these inflated prophecies. He was well aware that the real object of this new gospel preached by enemies of the race of Obrenovitch was to oust him from his throne. In this strait Milan looked about him to find some strong men on whom he could rely to pilot him through the situation. His choice fell upon Nikola Christitch, or Christie, a man of ability, but not well fitted for the post for which he was chosen. Christitch and his wife Artemesia exercised an unfortunate influence on the life of King Milan.

If Artemesia had not crossed Milan's path, and had not made use of her dangerous attractions to ensnare him, the worst portion of the King's history would not have had to be recorded. She was his evil genius: her baleful influence, her unholy charms, worked his destruction, and destroyed the last remnant of respect that remained in the minds of his subjects. Milan is not the only man whose career has been wrecked by a woman's influence.

Since Eve first tempted Adam the book of life has been filled with records of woman's wiles and man's weakness.

Many times did Milan try to escape from the toils which Artemesia wound about him, but he could not free himself, and in his despair and self-abasement it is said he was on the point of repeating the terrible tragedy of Mayerling.

"He was," writes one of his biographers, "an intimate friend of the unfortunate Rudolf of Austria, and after the Crown Prince's tragic end Milan's thoughts took the direction of suicide as an escape from the degraded position in which he stood. Artemesia, however, was not so idealistic as the Baroness Betschera, who was content to die with her lover. Artemesia loved life, and especially did she love the prospect of being a queen."

These last words which I have quoted point to the detestable plot between Christitch and his wife.

Christitch was clever and ambitious, and was willing to further the divorce planned by Artemesia if properly paid. His first instalments were numerous high offices and grand decorations. He was appointed Minister to Berlin.

This unpleasant episode would not have any interest attached to it were it not that it brought about the series of events which for years interested and scandalised Europe. I allude to the continued struggle between Milan and Natalie. That in any circumstances they would have quarrelled is a foregone conclusion, but that their quarrel rose to the height it did must certainly be set down to the unfortunate relations between Milan and Artemesia. Not only was Artemesia Natalie's rival in Milan's affections, but her rivalry reached to Natalie's position as Queen, for, as already mentioned, she had set her mind on attaining to this exalted position. In a moment of weakness Milan had yielded to her cajoleries and had given his royal word that if Natalie carried out her threat of getting a divorce, which at this moment seemed probable, he would make Artemesia his Queen, it being assumed that the amiable Christitch would offer no objection to the elevation of his wife. Milan's friends tried to deter him from his purpose. Foremost amongst them was the unfortunate Rudolf of Austria, who, with the Crown Princess Stephanie,

came at this time to visit the King and Queen, and acted as true friends to both. The Prince advised Milan not to commit such folly as to wreck his life for the sake of so unworthy a creature as Artemesia; he strongly urged on Milan a reconciliation with the Queen, whose dignified conduct in such circumstances filled both the Prince and Princess with admiration. Later came a letter of parental advice from the Emperor Francis Joseph (whose heart ere long was to be wrung by his son's similar infatuation and miserable end). The Emperor pointed out the dire consequences which must inevitably ensue from a continuance of the scandal, and urged Milan to a reconcilation with his wife.

Milan's heart was easily touched by kindness and sympathy, and he was also feeling the disgraceful position in which he had placed himself, and which had lowered him not only in the opinion of all right-thinking people, but even of those whose ideas of propriety were as lax as his own. He therefore readily agreed to abandon all idea of making a queen of Artemesia, and sought instead to be reconciled to Natalie, who on her side met the approaches most willingly. The first and most necessary thing was to break with Artemesia, who made use of every engine and worked every influence, political or otherwise, to keep her influence over the King. The position of Milan was despicable; he

was like a man between two fires, who has not courage enough to extinguish the one which was most likely to annihilate him. The tension and mental torture were so great that he was several times on the point of blowing out his brains ; but his courage failed him, or rather his good angel saved him from this last degradation. Meantime "a perfect hell," we are told, raged in the Castle, the scandalous scenes which took place being the subject of general conversation and losing nothing by repetition. The King's popularity, which had never recovered the defeat of Slivnitza, sank now even lower. He was hissed as he rode along the streets, while the fair Artemesia was obliged to have police protection, else the excited mob would have wreaked their vengeance on her.

The Queen, on the other hand, made capital out of the situation. We have already mentioned some of the wrongs she had to suffer. Of course, it may be said that other women, royal or otherwise, have suffered far worse. Natalie was not of the nature that bears insult patiently. She made her injuries public and raised the country against Milan. Her beauty, her charm, and her wrongs enlisted on her side every manly heart. The Austrian Ambassador, Count Khevenhüller, interested himself warmly for her. Strong efforts were made by her friends, Garaschanin amongst the number, to induce Milan to abdicate

so that Natalie should be Regent during the young Prince's minority. From the moment this plan was broached to the King, hatred towards Natalie took possession of his breast: the most terrible scenes occurred between husband and wife; they would arise at any moment, and the ministers, or whoever were present, had to interfere to prevent personal violence. It was now that for the first time the desire for a separation arose in Milan's mind; he confided his intention to his friend the Crown Prince of Austria, who answered, "Bear *your* trial as I have borne mine. I can sympathise with your fate, but you *must* avoid any further scandal, or you will lose all."

This was undoubtedly good advice, but what about the trials that Natalie had borne for so many years? Was not her fate worthy of equal commiseration?

CHAPTER VI

WE have come now to a portion of this life-story when the shadows grow deeper and the brightness dies away into gloom. We turn our thoughts back to the beginning of the narrative ; we look on the portrait of the young Russian Natalie Ketschko ; we see her in all the pride of her youth and beauty, with her royal lover, and the promise of a brilliant future. What has happened to crush all the joy and the romance, the poetry and the beauty out of the picture ? It is idle, at this distance of time, to search into the causes which shattered the brilliant promise of the early youth of Milan and Natalie. It is not a new story, this parting of two lives, this severance of hearts that once beat in unison : it is one of the oldest on record ; it goes back to the beginning of all things, and will probably be found at the end of all things, for since the days of Solomon women have wrecked men's lives.

From what has been narrated in the preceding chapters, the reader has already drawn his conclusions,

and one of these has been that Queen Natalie was not of the order of those long-suffering wives who bear open desertion meekly ; she would not submit tamely to be set aside for such a creature as Artemesia. Regardless of the want of dignity involved in such a course, she made her jealousy and her disputes with her royal Consort the theme of general talk. An officer then in the garrison at Belgrade describes the situation in a letter to his family :—

"Belgrade,

"18*th October*, 1886.

"The Castle is in utter confusion ; one scandalous scene succeeds the other ; the King looks ill and as if he never slept. Poor fellow ! he flies for refuge to us in the guard-house and plays cards with the officers. Sometimes he speaks bitterly about his unhappiness at home. The army is devoted to him : the defeat of Slivnitza is forgotten. Card-playing, however, is his worst enemy ; it will work his total ruin. He loves it passionately, and plays excitedly and for high points. Quite recently the Turkish consul carried away from the card-room at the Castle 10,000 ducats which he had won from the King, who loses constantly, while the others win. Also, when he plays with us, and consequently for small stakes, he is equally unlucky, and never wins sixpence."

Meantime a new and formidable party had started up, and was advancing with rapid strides towards its end—the ruin of the existing dynasty in Servia. This "party of progress," as it was called—the progress being pure and unadulterated Radicalism—had for its pilot Milutin Garaschanin, who, as the reader may remember, had cherished hopes of being chosen as the ruler of Servia. It has been stated by some writers that, in 1879,[1] when Garaschanin offered Milan his friendship and his services, he was actuated by a desire to revenge this disappointment. There is no doubt his conduct was not that of a true friend; but in politics, and especially amongst the politicians of Servia, this fidelity in friendship was indeed rare. Milutin had that most useful of all good gifts, especially to the politicians—he was a splendid orator, and in this gift was not easily surpassed. Even his greatest opposers were brought round by his extraordinary eloquence, and hung upon his words with rapture. When he rose to speak the word went round, "Garaschanin speaks!" and at once the Chamber was crowded with eager, excited listeners. His gifts did not end here. He was likewise a brilliant writer, and ranked as one of the first of journalists. The political programme he now put before the nation was one of exceeding charm. He drew a fancy picture of the future glories of Servia,

[1] We are retracing our steps to the beginning of Milan's reign.

when, united to Austria by a close alliance, she would draw round her the Balkan Islands, who would look to her for help and protection, while at the same time they would consider her (Servia) as the centre of culture and civilisation.

Milan accepted this glorious programme amidst general rejoicing. He also accepted Milutin Garaschanin, who, after Ristisch retired in 1879, was one of the Ministry with Pirochanitz. For four years Milan's popularity remained at the zenith; then came the dark days, when clouds took the place of sunshine, and troubles followed upon one another rapidly. The starting-point of this decline was the extravagance which had now become general in the Servian capital. The dignity of a monarch requires more splendour and magnificence than does a secondary position, and to keep royal state as it should be kept needs money. Milan and Natalie longed to imitate the splendour of the late French Court, and to do this was to empty the exchequer of the King of Servia. The money question became a crucial difficulty. It was a source of constant friction between the married pair, and from this moment the downward course set in. Disaster followed upon disaster. The defeat of Slivnitza was the downfall of Garaschanin; but the Radical party remained in full force. In fact, they were stronger than ever. They brought Servia, as we shall see later, into an

abyss from which she could not deliver herself. Naturally they repudiate this accusation indignantly, and they likewise deny emphatically that they had any share in forcing King Milan to abdicate. This denial, however, is not borne out by facts, and the Radical party in Servia cannot show clean hands as to their participation in the King's downfall. They were at that time, and have still continued to be, a formidable trouble to any ruler of Servia, being numerically the strongest party in the State, while in their ranks are to be found the most capable men as well as the most unscrupulous.

One of the first actions of the Radical Government was the natural outcome of their Radicalism, the recall of all their friends who, during the Ministry of Garaschanin, had been given a hint to keep out of Servia. Of these, twenty former leaders came rushing back, their Radicalism in red-hot condition. Last of all came their leader, by name Pasie, or Pastisch. He had, we are told, the air of a mediæval saint as he walked with dignified composure through the streets of Belgrade. From the newspaper hack to Minister Sava Gruitch, everyone paid homage to Pastisch : the soldiers on guard at the gates of the Castle saluted ; some said they presented arms as to royalty. And why not ? Pastisch was the real King. His reign was not entirely a reign of terror, but it was nevertheless a despotism. Pastisch and his con-

fidential friends, Aja Stanovitch and Jovan Gjaja, were the triumvirate who decided on every question, political and otherwise. They were practically the rulers ; they gave the law even to the Court ; and it was their supremacy as well as the power wielded by the *Glawni Odbor*, the Radical organ, which in the end brought about the downfall of the party itself.

The Minister Sava Gruitch, well-meaning and honest as he was, found himself forced to embrace a line of conduct he had never contemplated. He was driven along by the attacks of the *Glawni Odbor*, until at last he came into violent conflict with the men who were responsible for its dangerous doctrines and its bad grammar, for, needless to say, the *Glawni Odbor* was no treat in the way of literature : it was of the lowest type,—"refuse" from a literary point of view.

What was decided by Pastisch in the little room in Prince Michael's Square had to be put into execution by Sava Gruitch and the other ministers. Pastisch, Aja Stanovitch, and Jovan Gjaja (both of these had been sent by the head centres to watch the progress of Radicalism in Servia), were the real rulers of the country, and held the power in their hands.

This system was bound to make shipwreck, and its unhealthy methods, together with the strict discipline which was brought to bear on the members of the party (who were indignant at the tutelage in

which they were kept), in the end overthrew the Pastisch Government. Sava Gruitch especially showed signs of insubordination ; in particular did he resist the growing tyranny of the *Glawni Odbor*, which was Pastisch's mouthpiece, and to which most of the Radical party paid servile deference.

Another marked figure which at this moment appeared on the stage of Servian politics was the Metropolitan Michael, a burning hot Radical, ready to stand or fall with the party to which he belonged. Born of poor parents, with no claim to rank or influence, Michael, by his talents and strong personality, rapidly mounted the clerical ladder until he attained the dignity of Metropolitan of Servia, a post which gave him wide-spreading influence over the internal and external policy of the country. He was the spiritual head of the Russian party, and a bitter foe of Austria and of King Milan.

To the Metropolitan of Belgrade came all those who had leanings to Panslavism, and the Russian envoy, or ambassador, although nominally accredited to His Servian Majesty, was *de facto* accredited to the Metropolitan Michael. In other words, Michael was acting over again the part played in Bulgaria by the Metropolitan Clement, who had been the intellectual medium by whom Prince Alexander of Battenberg had been dethroned—only now it was King Milan who was to be made throneless. Queen Natalie was

to rule in his stead with the Metropolitan Michael as Prime Minister.

Milan, however, was not yet at the end of his resources. In spite of his degradation, his madness for cards, and his passion for Artemesia, he had glimmerings of sagacity, and his grip of the crown was not so easily loosened as the Metropolitan Michael imagined. So far as Queen Natalie was in question, there can be little doubt that there was some ground for the supposition that the Radicals would have set her up as nominal ruler,—at all events during the minority of the young Prince. The Austrian Ambassador, Kevenhüller, who was full of admiration for the Queen's talent and general charm, had already written to his Government advising this step as the best way to unravel the tangled skein of Servian politics. Garaschanin also, who owed so much to the King's friendship, was in favour of his abdication and the setting up of the Queen. It was not, however, easy of accomplishment. The principal result brought about by the ventilation of the idea was a total breach between husband and wife.

The Emperor Francis Joseph made efforts to prevent Milan from rushing to his own destruction : he was far-seeing enough to grasp that a separation would have the worst possible effect, and would raise a storm of disapprobation which would probably

alienate the few who still remained faithful to the King. The danger, however, lay in the Radical party, which had now to be reckoned with as the strongest element in Servian politics. Many of the Radical members were inclined to champion Natalie, while others merely looked upon her as a *casus belli*, which might turn the nation against the King, "any stick being good enough to beat a dog with." For this reason the Radical leaders fostered the discord between the King and Queen by every means in their power, spreading the report of it through foreign countries with gross exaggerations, and by this means lowering the House of Obrenovitch, so that the dethronement of the King might appear to the eyes of Europe a foregone conclusion. The most scandalous stories were circulated, of which the famous *Glawni Odhor* was, if not the actual originator, the propagator. Unfortunately, the domestic life of the King and Queen gave food for scandalmongers to feed on. It would seem as if the royal couple played the game for their adversaries. As is always the case, the tongue of scandal added its malicious quota to every incident, every slight misunderstanding being transformed into "a terrible scene"; while if the King paid the most trifling attention to a pretty woman, the evil tongues of the gossips were set wagging, and the Queen's jealousy was worked upon for political purposes. Thus from

the beginning to the miserable finish Milan and Natalie were the victims of Russia's diplomatic schemes.

The situation intensified, and shortly became unbearable. "There was no peace anywhere, nor did anyone belonging to the Court enjoy a moment of tranquillity." In the beginning of 1887 Milan had made up his mind to dissolve his marriage, but again the Emperor Francis Joseph intervened, and the King abandoned his resolution. He was, however, determined that Natalie should quit Servia and reside in another country, whither she would be accompanied by the Crown Prince, then a boy of twelve.

In 1887 an agreement was drawn up between the King and Queen and signed by their Majesties. By this document it was definitely arranged that from the year 1888, or at latest 1889 (the date being left to the Queen to fix), the education of the Crown Prince should be carried on in Germany, the choice of place being left at the disposition of the King. It was obligatory that the said place of residence, in addition to being in a suitable climate, should possess a church where the Servian or Russian ritual was observed. The education of the Crown Prince, in its more advanced stage, was to be conducted in France, but during the first and elementary course of study he would remain under the care of his mother, who

for this purpose should reside in whatever town was selected by the King. When the Crown Prince paid his annual visit to his father, the Queen was at liberty to spend these weeks either at Dresden, Stuttgart, Vienna, or Bonn. It was specified that two months of the autumn were to be spent at some health resort, whither the boy-Prince should accompany his mother. For the winter the Queen was at liberty to reside in whatever town was chosen by the King for the Prince's educational course, but if the Queen should decide to spend the coming winter in the south, the education of the Crown Prince would not be conducted abroad.

Any dispassionate reader must agree that this was an arrangement in which no reasonable mother or wife could find a flaw. The Queen's position was fully recognised, and her authority unquestioned. It was only just that it should be so. Natalie had done nothing to forfeit her position as Queen and mother, and the separation from her husband was made necessary by *his* shortcomings. Husband and wife parted, however, on friendly terms, the agreement being signed at Belgrade, April 6th, 1887.

In the following May Queen Natalie left Servia for Baden, accompanied by her son. The King attended his wife and the Prince to the railway station, and took a formal farewell of Natalie.

The correspondence during the first period of their separation seems to have been of a very amicable character, especially on Milan's side.

LETTER I.

Dated September, 1887.

"GLEICHENBERG.

"I would be much obliged if you will let me know what are your wishes as to our future relations towards one another. As on my home journey I must pass Baden, it would be, I think, proper for me to stop there, in order to pay you a short visit before I continue my journey to Vienna. If this proposal should not please you, then perhaps you would spare Sacha to me. I would only take him as far as Vienna and bring him back the next afternoon."

The humility of this request on the part of a husband and father should have touched the Queen. It evidently had not that effect, for she answers coldly. It is true she agrees to receive his visit, but makes bitter complaints of what she calls her enforced banishment from Servia, "where she had received nothing but kindness, the recollection of which was dear to her heart." She concludes this somewhat irrelevant letter with these words: "God grant you may not some day bitterly repent that you have

deprived Sacha of the advantages he would have enjoyed if brought up in the country which he will later have to govern. In conclusion, she prays, "May God enlighten you, and may you one day acknowledge the injustice done to me." Then she adds these words: "You might have chosen a more experienced consort, but none more devoted than Natalie."

Milan did not respond to this approach, and perhaps on this account Natalie writes no more letters to him till March 19th, 1888. The winter months she and the Prince had spent in Florence, and from thence she writes to Milan :—

"As according to our little Memorandum Sacha's[1] studies are to commence in the autumn, I think it will be best for him to return to Belgrade after Easter. I shall come with him, but I shall not remain more than a few days, after which I will accompany him to whatever town in Germany is determined on for his course of studies, and there I shall choose my place of residence, buying a house, furnishing it, etc."

In April, 1888, a political crisis was at hand, and the King, writing to Natalie, asks her to postpone her visit to Belgrade until this excitement is over. In this letter he touches on a delicate subject.

[1] The "Memorandum" referred to is the agreement quoted on page 155. "Sacha," the pet name for the Prince.

LETTER I.

"I regret to see you are so determined to carry out your intention of coming here [to Belgrade], as our child is now old enough to notice the estrangement between us. Evidently this position, which distresses me, does not trouble you, and of course I am powerless to alter your intention if you have resolved to put it into effect. There is, however, one point I am bound to mention. In the present excited state of affairs it would be to me a grave anxiety to have my son with me; and, moreover, it might be dangerous for him as Heir Apparent; and as you are his mother, this should be for you as well as for me a matter of serious consideration. If you doubt the correctness of my information on this point, pray inquire from the friends upon whose judgment and sincerity you can rely, and be guided by their advice, which, if it be sincere, will coincide with mine."

LETTER II.

A Letter from the Queen to King Milan.

"FLORENCE,

"20*th April*, 1888.

"I was beginning to think I should have no answer from you when your letter arrived.

"Since I cannot remain here any longer I have

made up my mind to leave on Tuesday evening for Vienna. Beyond this I have not settled anything.

"My friends in Belgrade, in consequence of the threats they have received, write to me but seldom, and give me only personal information, strictly avoiding anything of a political character. I suppose I must put faith in what you say, but knowing, as I do, your pessimistic nature, I repeat once more that you are exaggerating the situation, and there is no reason why Sacha should not return to Servia. You must be aware that it is a matter of policy that a Crown Prince should live in his native land, especially in time of danger, and on this last point I am convinced there is really nothing to fear. For the rest, in different circumstances (this concerns our relations to one another), he would have been brought up in his own country; it is indeed sad for him that he should be forced to live in a strange land through our fault. You may be certain my stay shall not be longer than six weeks, and in so short time nothing can happen. I believe Sacha is quite as dear to me as he is to you (although perhaps my love differs in some way from yours), and I have great confidence in the goodness of God.

"The reason why I make such a point of returning for even a short time to Belgrade is that I have money matters to arrange, this being impossible to manage in a strange country. I will therefore assert

my right, and it is your fault if I am forced to do so publicly. You know well that when I signed our 'Memorandum' I did so to avoid, at any sacrifice, a public scandal, and to keep our names out of the public press. As for Sacha, he is still too much a child to observe much. Besides, he has been brought up to consider all you do as right, and it is your affair to keep him in this belief; but if you have no control over your behaviour towards me, and behave to me as you did after my return from Malta, Sacha will naturally take notice of it. Therefore you have this matter altogether in your own hands.

* * * * *

"Perhaps you think that I wish to upset your plan of educating Sacha in Germany, and that it is to agitate on this point that I desire to return to Belgrade. This is not the case, although it is true that I still hold the same opinion on this matter as I did at first hearing it: but I have submitted, and shall offer no opposition to your wish on the subject. Sacha has had a happy childhood—such a one as one would wish for those we love. Let it be our effort to keep him in this child's paradise as long as we can. I will do my part, and surely it is not too much to ask you to play the part of husband and father for one short month. Another woman would quarrel with you, but I pity you too

much, for if you have made me unhappy, you are still more unhappy than I am, and the day will come when you will view things differently, and you will find no excuse for your own conduct.

"NATALIE."[1]

Receiving no answer to this communication, three weeks later we find in a letter from Natalie to Sava Gruitch (the minister) words to the same effect. "I intend to leave Florence on August 26th or 27th. After a short stay in Vienna I shall come to Belgrade for six weeks or so. From thence I shall go to some German baths, and on my way shall select my winter quarters." She then goes on with her grievances :

"It would be false if I were to say this plan is one after my heart, but since no one (in a Constitutional country) has raised their voice to protest against a foreign education for the Crown Prince of Servia, I have only to submit. Nevertheless, I deplore that it should be so; it makes me miserable, but, nevertheless, I submit. May God grant that no bad consequences may result. We are all in excellent health, and in spite of the vexation that

[1] This very able letter, which just touches the points of difference without enlarging upon them too much, was, from the cleverness which distinguished it, unpalatable to Milan ; he felt that the Queen saw through all his tergiversations, and that she was quite aware that he wished her not to come because Artemesia Christitch was filling her place.

may be in store I rejoice to think I shall once more see my dearly loved Belgrade."

To this letter comes rather a dry reply from the minister.

"I have informed the King of your Majesty's intention to come to Belgrade during the sitting of the National Assembly." Then he goes on to tell her that the Cabinet (of which he was the leading minister) had been dismissed from office, and that therefore he was no longer able to be of any further use to her.

This communication was answered almost immediately by a letter from the King. The tone is altered, being much colder. There is decided heartlessness in the manner in which he remarks that considering the relations between them the keeping up of correspondence is quite unnecessary. He writes frankly, "There is only one subject of mutual interest—'our son.' I am quite of your way of thinking as to the necessity of your making your home in Germany, as it is my opinion that it is of the utmost importance to your son that he should receive his early training in a country where education is made a matter of serious moment. I am also of your way of thinking as to the advantage of your settling in the neighbourhood of the school or college where your son is to be educated. You will then be able to

make acquaintance with the surrounding neighbourhood, and can choose that best suited for your cure. I must ask you to give the present position your most careful consideration. 'Our little Memorandum,' as you call our legal agreement, is the basis of our relations. I do not make any objection, but I cannot help regretting that you seem to have set your mind upon coming here, as I am of opinion it seems that the child will remark upon the curious relations which exist between his parents. This regret on my part is purely platonic. I do not wish to prevent you from coming."

The King then goes over his former ground as to the attitude of the Radical party, "which is such that it will be necessary to hold them in check even by force, if necessary." "It is not a safe moment for the Heir Apparent to come to Belgrade, and will add considerably to my [Milan's] own anxiety." And "it would be an ease to my mind if you would delay coming here, and would spend the month of September somewhere else. I therefore look forward to your next letter, which I am sure will bring your consent, although at the same time I long to see Sacha again. If you doubt the truth of my statements as to the turbulent spirit of the Radicals, consult your friends, and they will convince you of my sincerity, on which you may rely, my only desire

being that you may be in a safe place, where my son may run none of those risks, which, if he were here, would keep me perpetually on the *qui vive*.

"MILAN."

The Queen had to agree to this. She remained at Florence, chafing much at having to delay her visit to Belgrade, which, she fondly imagined, was only put off. Alas, poor thing, she was speedily disillusioned as to this, her self-deception having been in a certain measure encouraged by those about her, who dared not tell her the truth, and thought it best to let her cling to her delusion to the end. From the first the Queen had never fully gauged the determination of her adversaries to keep her out of Servia. Considering the evils that would follow on her home-coming, the unrest and turbulence which would ensue, one cannot feel surprised that it was the wish not only of the King and his Ministry, but likewise of all those who wished well to Servia, that her visit should be prevented. Her presence was certain to cause riots and ill-feeling amongst the people, who were ready to seize any opportunity for attacking Milan, who was at this moment highly unpopular; and from this point of view it was undoubtedly prudent not to allow the Queen to set foot in Belgrade. The Queen, however, had fully made up her mind not

to be kept any longer from putting her wish into execution, and on the 4th of June she writes from Wiesbaden to the King :—

"In twelve days the six weeks' delay you asked for will expire, and on that date I have arranged to begin my journey to Belgrade."

All through the letter from which I have quoted above there is a lack of the courtesy which is a marked feature of her previous correspondence. She wants to know what new plan he is concocting in order to prevent her visit to Belgrade. At the same time she takes elaborate pains to prove that she has no intention of remaining there. She tells him she has rented a villa at Wiesbaden, which during her absence in Servia will be put in order for her occupation. She concludes by begging of him to answer this letter ; she adds that if she receives no answer she will leave Wiesbaden on June 10th for Vienna, from whence she will continue her journey to Belgrade.

Her earnest request for a reply leads one to think that she had some doubt as to the probability of the King sanctioning her visit to Belgrade. This doubt proved to be justified, for on June 11th the King, for the first time during their correspondence, writes in an angry and even cruel tone. He alludes to the total want of harmony which had always

existed between them, and quotes her last letter as the best proof of this discord. He considers the time has at last come to put an end to the intolerable position in which both parties are placed. "I have accordingly to inform you that this day I have sent in my application to our Holy National Church for permission to dissolve our marriage. I therefore request that you will on your side secure the services of a competent lawyer, who will give you instructions as to the necessary questions, etc., which we shall both have to answer.

"MILAN."

The heartless tone of this letter may have been assumed, but this does not seem probable. Anyhow, it changed the Queen's feelings, and filled her heart with bitterness. Of course, it may be said that she knew that the separation, which had been long in the air, was a foregone conclusion; still, any amount of preparation does not turn the edge of a sword-thrust. Moreover, a woman's heart is strangely illogical. Love is generally the pivot upon which every action of a woman's life turns, and although the first fervour of passion may wane, the love which once made up the happiness of life lingers, as does the scent of a rose long after its bloom has passed away. It seems to me that this lingering regret had a place in Natalie's heart. She was too proud to show it, but it peeps out unconsciously in some of her letters to the King.

Moreover, he was Sacha's father, and Sacha was her treasure.

There had of late been no actual talk of seeking the decree of separation, and in spite of their differences, the friends of both King and Queen had been hopeful that in the near future some sort of amnesty, if not actual reconciliation, might be arranged between the royal couple. This hope was now at an end; the dark hour had come, and there seemed little prospect that the darkness would pass away.[1]

Everyone must feel for the poor Queen, distracted between her desire to get back to Belgrade and her motherly fears for her child: not knowing whether the whole story was got up to keep her away, and yet afraid to fly in the face of what might be the truth. She wrote letters here, there, everywhere; to the ministers, to Myatovitch, and to Sava Gruitch. Finally—and this must have been a sore trial to the poor wounded heart—to Christitch, who was President of Council in the new Administration. It is easy to understand that the husband of Artemesia would

[1] There is no doubt, however, that the Queen showed a singular want of judgment in forcing her visit to Belgrade at this moment. She must have known that Artemesia being there complicated the situation terribly. Probably she was the real cause of Natalie's wish to return to the capital, where she had little doubt she would have the greater portion of the people on her side, and with the popular feeling in her favour she would be able to turn out her rival. She did not think of the scandal this would have created, of the degradation of her husband, and the discredit of the whole situation.

not be the one to champion the Queen's cause. One can read the veiled insolence between every line of his reply to Her Majesty's appeal.

"BELGRADE, 1*st May*, 1888.

"With all humility I reply to the letter with which your Majesty has honoured me. Allow me to point out that my position does not give me the right to express my opinion, neither does it come within my province to give my consent or refuse my permission to the return of your Majesty to Belgrade; neither do I consider myself (in consequence of the office I hold) in any way called upon to exercise any influence in any particular direction, or to interfere in any way whatever between your Majesty and our gracious King, your Consort. The only service within my power is to give my word of honour that as I am not called upon to offer any obstacles to your plans, I shall not take any step to interfere with your actions. I have never done so, and I never shall.

"I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without informing your Majesty how very agreeable it is to us —I mean to my colleagues as well as to me (in my office of President of Council)—that the Crown Prince is not coming to Belgrade at the present time, in view of the circumstances, which, as I have just pointed out, are not favourable for his visit.

"Your Majesty's obedient servant,

"NIKOLA CHRISTITCH."

Not even her warmest partisans deny that the Queen put herself in a false position by asking a favour of Minister Christitch, and beyond this further comment is unnecessary. Mortified and disappointed, Natalie at last acknowledged herself defeated, but considered it in the light of a momentary failure only. The French have an expressive proverb: "Reculer pour mieux sauter," and on this wise advice Natalie now acted. Accompanied by the Prince and her attendants, she left Baden, and went to Wiesbaden, where she was joined by her aunt, Princess Murussi.

At this time the Crown Prince was twelve years old. The Queen, his mother, was twenty-eight. Her charming appearance, her social gifts, sensibility, and sweetness of manner gained her friends on every side, while her distressful position excited the utmost sympathy. Every man was ready to fight in her defence, every woman to shed tears over the wrongs of the wife. "Those who visited Wiesbaden at this period will not easily forget the impression Natalie made. She walked along the promenade with a light, graceful movement; her feet hardly seemed to touch the ground, her figure was elegant, her finely-cut face was lit up by those wonderful eyes, once seen never forgotten, brilliant, tender, loving; her luxuriant hair of raven black was loosely coiled round the well-set head or fell in curls on the beautifully arched neck.

QUEEN NATALIE, A PORTRAIT TAKEN DURING HER RESIDENCE IN FLORENCE.

page 170.

The honest Germans who looked at this apparition of grace and beauty simply fell down and adored her, while in high life she was the idol of society. For each one she had a pleasing smile, a gracious bow, or a few words, spoken in a musical voice." La Comtesse de Takovo (for so she was called) was the centre of attraction in 1888. Wonderful was the sympathy and interest taken in the cruel trial she had to undergo. The whole town, from the highest nobleman to the woodcutter in the forest, was on her side. Every man was ready to champion the cause of the beautiful Queen Natalie.

Meantime the feelings between the royal couple grew every day more embittered. It was in vain that crowned heads interfered and intimate friends gave prudent counsel; nothing changed the King's inflexible purpose of separating the mother and son. In her despair Natalie turned for protection to the Emperor of Germany. William II. was not likely to disregard the petition of a woman in such sore distress. He answered her appeal with a reassuring promise that so long as she remained in *his* kingdom she need not fear; every protection would be afforded to her and the Prince, measures being taken by his (the Emperor's) orders that she should suffer no molestation and no interference with her actions, always (he added) having regard to the courtesy due to her distinguished Consort and likewise to

the international rights existing between European Powers.

This reassuring answer calmed the Queen's fears, but it was only a momentary calm. Milan was in deadly earnest, as Natalie was soon to find out, for now General Protitsch made his appearance in Wiesbaden, charged with the King's commands to bring the Prince back to Servia, using, if absolutely necessary, the strongest measures to effect the purpose. The instructions given to the General were very decided.

The following was the first despatch from Milan to General Protitsch and communicated by him to the Queen :—

"I received your telegram of yesterday evening. If the Queen desires that I should abandon the divorce proceedings, she must show proof of her determination to make an alteration in her life, the first step being to acknowledge the rights of the King as husband and father. She must also give a proof of this obedience by offering no opposition to the departure of the Crown Prince on Wednesday next, accompanied by you, Dokitsch, and Thiritsch. The dissolution of our marriage presents no such difficulties as the Queen imagines ; it is looked upon here as a usual thing. The Church will pronounce the dissolution of the marriage tie.

"The Prince is to start on his journey on next Wednesday, and will remain with me till August

25th, after which he will return to his mother, who is never to visit Servia without my consent. And for the rest I accept the fact that until January 1st, 1893, the Prince will spend most of his time in Germany, after which date he will return to Servia, where his holidays will always be spent with me. But from his return here until he attains his majority he will live under the same roof as his beloved mother.

"If the Queen should not give you an audience, inform her of these arrangements in writing. To-morrow early you must repair to the Government Office in Wiesbaden, and there interview the President. Inform him of the departure of the train, and beg of him, in my name and that of the Royal House of Servia, to give you on the occasion every assistance in his power, in case the Queen should resist my written orders. Likewise be so good as to inform the Queen that the last hour for her final answer, 'Yes' or 'No,' will expire to-morrow evening at six o'clock, after which time she must consider the proposal made by me as null and void. Explain likewise to the Queen that in case of her accepting my proposals, the act, duly signed and attested, will be forwarded to her on the evening of the day the Crown Prince arrives in Belgrade.[1]

"MILAN."

[1] This alludes to a proposal made by Milan in connection with the divorce proceedings.

The Queen in her distress turned for assistance to the crowned heads of Europe. Monsieur Marienvitch was despatched to Berlin and Monseur Wasseljevitch to St. Petersburg, but without success. Few people care to interfere in conjugal or family quarrels. The Emperor of Germany evidently gave his reasons for refusing, for the Queen telegraphed a hasty denial.

"WIESBADEN, *June* 28, 1888.

"SIRE,—I have never refused to send my son back to his own country, but I have tried to evade giving him up to General Protitsch until such time as I have received from the King my husband a written order to that effect.

"NATALIE."

The next day another despatch was sent to Potsdam, whither the Emperor had gone.

"SIRE,—Since I have determined *not* to give my son into General Protitsch's care, may I entreat your Majesty to give me your permission to leave Germany accompanied by my son, in order that I may present him to the King his father? The authorities here say that I cannot leave Wiesbaden accompanied by my son.

"NATALIE."

That same day the poor Queen telegraphed to Milan for the permission to keep Sacha for one month, adding, "If you will comply with this re-

quest of mine, I will send Dokitsch[1] to you with proposals which will be agreeable to both of us."

These proposals no doubt related to the separation, but Milan was not in the humour to entertain friendly compromises. His answer was the following telegram to Dokitsch, couched in the most peremptory terms :—

"Queen Natalie has sent me a telegram. I beg you will deliver to her the following reply. The Crown Prince of Servia is to return at once to Servia ; and for this purpose two officers have been despatched to Wiesbaden, General Protitsch and Major Tchiritsch.

"MILAN."

This blow seems to have upset what little composure the unfortunate Queen was mistress of. She, with singular imprudence, refused to receive Monseigneur Dimitri, Bishop of Nish, who had travelled to Wiesbaden for the purpose of hearing the Queen's objections to the divorce. She likewise absolutely declined to listen to any discussion, or to sign any paper which would bind her not to return to Servia without a written permit from the King. She also claimed as a right that the Crown Prince should reside under her care for the four years which had still to run, during which, according to

[1] Dokitsch was the Prince's tutor.

the agreement already quoted, the Prince was to pursue his education abroad.

Through the determined action of the Queen Milan was placed in a disagreeable position. Matters had gone too far to make it possible to recede even were he so inclined : but his whole desire was to rid himself of his wife, whom he considered in the light of an enemy ever conspiring to deprive him of his throne. He was, we must own, forced along the path he was pursuing. Matters had arrived at a point at which it was impossible to draw back. The Queen seems at this juncture to have thrown aside all prudence and moderation ; she would listen to no one who was not a violent adversary of the King, but leant more and more on the counsels of Russia, placing herself under the guidance of the Russian Consul-General in Frankfort, General Oseroff, and Pobedonoscheff, the Upper Procurator of the Russian Synod, who, by a *singular chance*, had arrived at this moment. Her advisers do not seem to have had the power of controlling the Queen's excitement, a notable instance of which is the telegram she sent to Minister Christitch :

"WIESBADEN.

"The President of the Police has informed me that on Thursday evening I must surrender my son to General Protitsch.

* * * * *

"This is your work. I demand of you what is the crime I have committed. *I* dread no inquiries into either my political or my private life.

"NATALIE."

This is an example of the agitation of the Queen's mind. She was possessed with the idea that some harm would befall her son. In vain General Protitsch tried to assuage her fears, assuring her that they were without any foundation, as the King his father would not hurt a hair of the boy-Prince's head, neither would anyone in Belgrade. Natalie, however, would listen to no soothing assurances. She fully believed some plot was hatched by the Christies, husband and wife, against the life of the Prince, and this premonition made her incapable of seeing the matter in any other light but that of her own vivid imagination. Her refusal to allow the Prince to obey the orders given by the King his father was a grave mistake on the Queen's side, and practically forced the situation. There was nothing left for General Protitsch but to give the order for the Prince to be removed by force. The boy fled screaming to his mother's arms, who, with a loaded pistol in her hand, cried, "Advance, and I fire!"

To the witnesses of this scene it was a terrible moment. The police officer was, however, equal to the occasion: "Your Majesty cannot be in earnest.

I have had my orders. Your Majesty knows an officer must obey orders."

General Protitsch accomplished his mission, and on the following evening the boy-Prince, on arriving at Budapest, was in his father's arms.

In Servia this episode caused an uproar. Milan's conduct was generally condemned, not for bringing back his son, but for the manner in which he had trampled on the mother's feelings. It added another indictment to the long list of the King's offences, while to swell the aggregate of his misdemeanours there presently came his effort to dissolve his marriage, this dissolution, as everyone in Belgrade was aware, being preliminary to an alliance with Artemesia Christitch. Here we have the key to Natalie's apparently outrageous defiance of the King's parental authority. What mother could have borne the thought that *her child* should be placed under the care of such a woman as was Artemesia, who, with her beauty and her winning ways, would soon get an influence over a nature like Sacha's and displace his own mother's image in his heart? This thought was unbearable, and might have made Natalie capable of anything. It must be owned that few women have gone through such a trial as was her lot to bear.

The Queen was still suffering from the grief of the separation from her son, when the first steps towards the divorce were taken. It is true that for

some years she had known that the King desired a separation. So far back as 1885 the subject had been under discussion. In the month of October of that year Milan, writing to the Queen on this subject, makes the following singular statement :—

"I am one of those who speak frankly what is in my mind, and I can say from my heart that your conduct in this matter (the separation) is a proof that you are worthy to have been chosen Queen of Servia."

Again, writing later from Nish : "I am proud," he says, "of your courage and of your dignified attitude, and it pleases me to see that the companion of my life is capable of doing her duty as a wife and a mother."

Truly this is curious commendation in the circumstances. It appears as if Milan was imitating Napoleon, who affected to be heart-broken at separating from Josephine. Probably Milan copied this illustrious example of how a man should act towards the woman he had solemnly sworn to protect. There can be little doubt, however, that the immediate cause of his bringing the matter before the Council at this particular moment was his infatuation for Artemesia. In defiance of the advice of his ministers and his friends, he pressed on the divorce proceedings at the very time that he had inflicted on the Queen the pain

and mortification of publicly taking her son from her care.

The Queen bore the first shock of this new trial with much dignity. Writing to the King, June 13th, 1888, she says :—

"I confess I was astonished at the contents of your letter, but I am less frightened than you imagine. Servia is not a country in which a wife can be thrown aside as if she were a mistress. . . . I challenge you to bring forward a single ground for putting me away. . . . The divorce is impossible, for on no conditions will I agree to it. Both my religious principles and my duty to my son prevent my taking any part in the matter. I shall, therefore, engage no lawyer to defend me."

This letter seems to have irritated the King to the utmost. He replies at once, beginning his letter :—

"Madame,—At last, after twelve years, we have both arrived at a conviction that for us to live together is an impossibility. We have never been like other married couples, for no harmony has ever existed between us. To-day, after a year's trial, the conviction is forced upon me that, even at the distance we are from one another, we could not discuss with even an approach to moderation the questions before us. Your letter, bearing date June 13th, is to me sufficient proof of this.

"I have never desired an open breach. I have

hesitated for years before taking any decided step, but now I believe the time has come when an end must be put to this most unbearable and utterly false position. The dislike we have one for the other, a dislike which is made evident at every turn, necessitates the final dissolution of our marriage."

The Synod, in conclave, debated the point as to whether their body or the Consistorium of Belgrade were the competent authority to decide in the divorce proceedings between their Majesties the King and Queen, the result of the deliberations being the decision of the Synod that the Consistorium was the competent authority in the matter of divorce.

"The Holy Synod decided, on the 14th July, that the Consistorium, acting in conjunction with the religious tribunals, is competent to consider and decide on such subjects as the separation between their Majesties King Milan and Queen Natalie. In consequence of this decree, we shall proceed to inform the Consistorium that the Holy Synod hereby gives over to the Consistorium all the papers which have relation to this trial, likewise the legal and other authorities by which the Synod can give to the Consistorium the right to act in this matter.

"*Signed*, THEODOSIUS MAROVITCH,
"Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan
of Servia."

The Consistorium, however, did not desire to have the onus of this unpleasant trial thrown upon them. They therefore declined with all respect to take upon themselves so arduous a duty as the decision of this thorny question. The Synod, nevertheless, had sufficient authority to enforce obedience, and in the second communication the Consistorium was lectured pretty sharply for their insubordination with regard to the commands of the Superior Chamber, and were exhorted to better behaviour. This rebuke, being administered in the names of the heads of the Church, who all signed the document, produced the desired effect, and the King's complaint was read.

On July 24th, 1888, the King's complaint against his wife was placed in the hands of the Metropolitan of Servia, Monseigneur Theodosius. This complaint set forth, under different headings, the Queen's shortcomings. The principal offence seems to have been the hatred borne by the Queen towards the King her husband, which showed itself in violence, furious passions, etc., and which, to use the words of the complaint, "was a chalice of bitterness which I, the King, had to drink to the very dregs." In spite of this "chalice," Milan, according to his own statement, exercised the most angelic patience and self-denial, which carried him to the extent of agreeing to the prayers of the Bishops that the National Church should interfere and bring about a reconciliation by inducing the Queen to return to the obedience she

"owed to me, her husband. Your Eminence knows how the Queen, with a singular lack of prudence, behaved towards the Vicars of the Church, absolutely refusing to receive Monseigneur Dimitri, Bishop of Nish."

Complaint of the King.

"1. For many years there has existed between my Consort and myself a distinct and mutual dislike."

Answer of the Queen.

"'For many years.' That this is impossible will be proved by the correspondence of the King and Queen, which, up to the year 1866, was of the most friendly character, as is proved by the copies of these letters now in the hands of the Consistorium. The originals can be submitted if necessary.

Complaint No. 2.

"During the last years there has been constant friction on the subject of the education of our only child, the Crown Prince of Servia, and since then we have lived apart."

Answer.

"The Queen has always regretted the difference, as can be seen by the letters 1, 2, of which copies can be produced if required. The Queen consented to the plan to please the King."

[1] Extract from the minutes of the Queen's trial.

These are specimens of the questions and answers, which number in all twelve on each side. They include accusations of "unkindness," "injudicious treatment of our well-beloved son the Crown Prince," etc.

Then followed a list of the Queen's offences.

1. That all attempts at reconciliation on the part of the King had been frustrated by the obstinate refusal of the Queen to accept any compromise.

2. That Her Majesty the Queen was guilty in refusing to obey the commands of her husband and Sovereign.

3. That the Queen disturbed by her rebellion against her Sovereign and husband, not alone the domestic peace of the royal household, but likewise the tranquillity of the kingdom.

4. That in consequence of this rebellion on her part it had become impossible that the union between their Majesties could continue, and that therefore the King prayed that the marriage tie between him and his Consort Queen Natalie might be speedily and finally dissolved.

The King's complaint, which filled many pages, wound up :—

"In consequence of what has been here stated, it is impossible that the union between Us and Our Consort Natalie can continue, and therefore We pray that Holy Church will pronounce, in as short a time

as is practicable, a divorce between Us and Our present Consort.

"I am your Eminence's most devoted Son, and likewise the most obedient Son of the Church,

"MILAN."

The Queen's answer, which is of considerable length, lays great stress upon the injustice she has suffered through the refusal of the Consistorium, or Court of Appeal, to allow her to appear in person to state her case.[1] This was her right, in accordance with a special feature in the legal code, a code drawn up by the very assembly which now refused its consent to her

[1] According to the rules laid down by the Court of Appeal, the Queen was justified in her complaint:—

"1st. That in accordance with the rules set forth at length in the Civil Code, particularly in Rules 142 and 143, which deal with Church Law on Marriage, there is a command that an attempt at reconciliation should be made between the contending parties.

"2nd. That the Consistorium, in accordance with rules laid down by Holy Church in Articles 133, 137, 140, and 141, should have summoned me to appear before their body in order to make an effort at reconciliation, and if this failed, to afford me the opportunity to discuss with the tribunal the grounds of the law proceedings and explain certain matters.

"For the rest, I am entitled to demand that the Consistorium should summon me to appear personally (for this is one of the written laws of the body) before the august assembly, and it is not allowable that it should have excluded me from this privilege. Therefore I shall never surrender my right to be heard.

"Further, as I have been deprived of this my legal right by forcible means, it is my turn to reject a decision which, being procured through illegal means, is, therefore, in the eyes of the law, null and void, and of no legal value whatever."

making use of it. "Therefore," writes the Queen, "I shall never cease from protesting against such injustice as has been shown to me, nor shall I cease from pleading my cause before the proper tribunal. If the Consistorium interferes with this my just right, then any sentence pronounced by their tribunal in the matter of the divorce between my royal husband the King and myself must be considered null and void, and of no legal value whatever."

This last sentence points to the weary struggle made by the Queen for justice. She knew well what lay beneath this agitation for a divorce, and she despised the men who were helping the King to set aside his lawful wife in order to make place for a creature like Artemesia Christitch. Moreover, she loved Servia, where she had come a bride not so many years ago. There is great allowance to be made for faults of judgment, while her cruel position deserves all sympathy. She was fighting a battle where the odds were much against her, for the King's ministers disliked her; she had but little support, and she had crowds of enemies, the foremost being her husband. As she says in her appeal to the Consistorium: "It has pleased the King my husband to banish from his kingdom as a malefactor, the first Queen of Servia, who loves the land of her adoption with all her heart. It has likewise been his pleasure to inscribe on the first page of the history of this new kingdom a

chronicle which not alone makes mirth for society in Belgrade and throughout the kingdom of Servia, but is the subject of criticism and astonishment to the civilised world of to-day, and will be judged at its right estimate by future generations.

"My private as well as my public life has been ever an open book which everyone can read. I have nothing to reproach myself with, and I can challenge the judgment of my contemporaries as well as that of future generations.

* * * * * *

"But I am a woman, and in spite of my position and my innocence, I must acknowledge that my wounded heart resents that, after the countless proofs which I have given of my submission to the King my husband, of my devotion to my son, and the countless prayers I have offered to Heaven for the greatness and the prosperity of my adopted country, I am forced to appear as a criminal before my judges. The position is, if possible, embittered by my conscience assuring me that I have neglected no duty, and that there is not a single action of my life which could be cited against me as a grave offence, or could put me to shame were it brought before the whole world. My fate is worthy of compassion, and should draw tears from the very stones; but I do not ask for pity, I demand justice."

The Queen's appeal, which was a lengthy document, caused a stir, and we find the King writing to the Synod to demand a copy ; and his next step was to adjourn all proceedings for three months. It would appear, however, that when the Synod did meet for the second time there was a majority of four against the divorce, and therefore, according to law, the King's petition was dismissed. It was in vain that Dr. Wolan Diordterisch endeavoured to persuade the Consistorium to ignore the majority ; they were honest men and not to be moved. Christitch, who was determined to gain the day, sent for Aleksa, one of the popes, and asked him what the Consistorium would do when the King had sent an answer contradicting all the Queen's statements. Aleksa took a couple of days to consider, and then told Christitch that by the rule of the Church the husband and wife should be, if possible, reconciled to one another. This was about the last thing Christitch would have desired, and he flew into a rage and dismissed Aleksa, who was, by the King's command, deprived of the office he held.

Great fear prevailed amongst the Queen's friends that the divorce would be obtained in spite of the majority, for everyone knew that the King was set upon it, and that the Metropolitan Theodosius was no friend to Natalie. In the month of October the divorce was pronounced in the following terms :

"That Milan I. has found it impossible to live in bonds of marriage with Natalie, his wife, although every effort has been made by the Holy Church towards a reconciliation, and therefore, in accordance with the written word of the Church, 'Thou shalt keep the secrets of thy King and praise the work of the Lord,' we have, after much consideration and prayer, arrived at the conclusion that the continuance of the marriage tie between their Majesties is impossible. We therefore make use of the authority which has descended to us from the Apostles, to whom was given the charge: 'Those you join on earth shall be joined in heaven, and those you loose on earth shall be parted in heaven.' And according to the rules of the Orthodox Church, and in virtue of the power committed to us as Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of Servia, we set aside the marriage which took place in the Orthodox Greek Cathedral of Belgrade on the 6th of October, 1875, between King Milan I. and Natalie, born Ketschko, and which marriage is now dissolved.[1] Given in our episcopal palace, 12th October, 1888.—THEODOSIUS."

[1] As previously mentioned a ceremony also took place at Vienna.

CHAPTER VII

THE divorce came at an unlucky moment for the King. The situation in which Milan found himself was bristling with difficulties. That he had in a measure created this evil condition did not improve the blackness of the outlook, nor were the difficulties made less by his attempts to conciliate the Radical party. As we have before seen, the Radicals were the lifelong enemies of the Obrenovitch dynasty; any reconciliation between them and the reigning house was one of those impossible dreams which melt away in the full light of day, and leave the dreamer wondering at the fantastic illusion which had possessed his imagination. One must not credit Milan with any self-deception as to the prospect of winning the Radical party to his side. Whatever were his faults, the King had a clear sense of the political situation; he knew full well that the opposition of such men as Pastisch and Garaschanin was directed principally against himself as King. The countless attempts made on his life, which only failed at the last moment, were all the work of the members

of the Radical clubs, and had for their object the extinction of the Royal House. Later on, after Milan's abdication, the plotters were not satisfied, and it was only the vigilant watch kept by the police which frustrated the attempts made to rid the country of the Obrenovitch dynasty.[1] Even at the moment when Milan and the Radicals had been reconciled—this was after the abdication of Milan, when it might have been supposed that all enmity to him had passed away—a movement sprang up, led by the Radical party, to deprive the House of Obrenovitch of all rights to the throne of Servia.

It has been said that in their rabid hatred of Milan, the members of the Radical party sheltered themselves behind Queen Natalie, engaging to forward all her ambitious plans; and that under this cover a powerful agitation was set on foot which had for its purpose the setting aside of the King. The Radical party made use of the discordant element in the King's married life to further blacken him in the eyes of the world. Many of them deny this accusation, but it is made by numerous authorities, so that one inclines to believe that, at all events, there is some truth underlying the statement. The Radical papers teemed with all sorts of accusations against Milan; they dragged his name into the very

[1] The late tragedy in Servia confirms this statement, and shows how deep-seated is the anti-dynastic feeling.

kennels of iniquity, and these horrors were scattered broadcast, read eagerly, and believed, as such things always are.

"It is an impossible task," says a German writer, "to try and clear the Radical party of these anti-dynastic attacks and tendencies, and they can congratulate themselves, at all events, on the success of their evil-minded efforts. It was the poison spread by the Radical papers which in 1889 drove Milan to abdicate. In that year nine-tenths of the population in Servia were Radicals, and the King had to face the fact that no Government which was not in accordance with the views of this powerful party could hope to stand; therefore there could be no such thing as paltering with this question."

It is hardly to be expected that the King, who loved a life of ease and pleasure, would endure this painful existence, and his absences from Servia became more frequent and of longer duration. Paris was the magnet. There he was extremely popular, keeping open house, and exciting the comments of the papers by his sumptuous entertainments. It will be naturally asked where he found the money. King Milan possessed, as before mentioned, extraordinary acumen in the art of speculation; it is an art which cannot be taught: it comes by a sort of intuition. Milan showed this intuition on many occasions, often surprising men who had devoted their lives to "finan-

cing." It was Milan who, when the Servian railway was first set on foot, indicated to the promoters of this scheme the proper way to obtain the vote of the majority of the Skupshtina. In the same way he often added to his own income by concessions of land, etc. It was unfortunate for Milan that his surroundings had not been favourable to the development of his many natural gifts. If he had played "life's game" on a larger board, he would have scored a success, but his efforts were dwarfed by the pettiness of his surroundings. His position was also made even more difficult by the intrigues of his ministers. A more dishonest set could not well be imagined. His friend and former minister, Milutin Garaschanin, of whom mention has frequently been made, was possessed by a "vaulting ambition," and soon saw that the only way to push himself was to join the Radicals: by their desire he made use of the influence he enjoyed to draw Queen Natalie into the same net. Natalie, whose wish to return to Servia was an *idée fixe*, was willing to make use of any stepping-stone which would lead to the desired end. Her alliance with such men as Garaschanin and his friends was a serious blow to the Ministry, who recognised how difficult it would be for them to hold together against such a combination as the Queen, Garaschanin, and the Radicals. Milan, who was amusing himself in Vienna, wrote an angry letter to

his former friend, threatening that he would disclose some of Garaschanin's evil deeds, and especially the Knitschanin-Markovitch affair, when, on the 23rd October, 1882, an attempt was made on King Milan's life in the Metropolitan Church. A woman named Hélène Markovitch, Hungarian by birth, fired two shots at the King, one of which would infallibly have taken effect had not the then War Minister, Colonel Franasovitch, thrown himself before the King, and so saved his life.[1] Hélène Markovitch, who was taken in the act, had been married twice, first to a physician, and afterwards to Colonel Markovitch, who, in consequence of some military offence, had been shot, in spite of all the efforts that had been made to obtain his pardon from the King. Hélène had written a farewell letter to her husband, which was returned to her with the following words on the envelope : "The person to whom this is addressed is already buried." The attempt made by Hélène was an act of private revenge. She, however, was said to have had an accomplice, also a widow, Hélène Knitschanin, who was confined in prison and was found dead one morning. Hélène Markovitch also died suddenly in 1883, after sentence of death had been commuted by Milan to life imprisonment. No one in Servia had the least doubt that both women had been killed, but it was nobody's business, and so the affair remained where it was.

[1] Franasovitch was wounded, but not dangerously.

By a curious accident Milan's letter to Garaschanin, reminding him of the Markovitch-Knitschanin affair, fell into the hands of Minister Gjaja, and it was immediately made use of by the Radicals to kill two birds with one stone, or, in other words, to make a great political *coup* which would annihilate both Garaschanin and the King. They looked for an important journal in which to place this startling piece of news, and they selected *The Political Correspondence*, published in Vienna, a paper of undeniable respectability. Milan's letter was despatched to the publisher, Dr. Schäfer. Dr. Schäfer, however, knew better than to offend the Emperor's chosen friend. Therefore, in a day or two, the terrible indictment came back to the sender.[1]

The letter which was returned by Dr. Schäfer was posted to the *Pester Lloyd* in Budapest, and was received thankfully and printed. It fell like a bomb-shell into the midst of society, causing unprecedented excitement, for it revived so many terrible memories, and contained such an awful indictment of Servian justice.

Garaschanin, who saw the importance of the situation, affected an honest indignation which could no longer be kept in check. He addressed to "Milan Obrenovitch," a letter which no one would address

[1] Meantime the matter had been noticed in the Foreign Office at Belgrade.

to a man who had been his friend, to say nothing of his King and benefactor. This precious document began with "A lecture on good manners, which is useless to one who is so ignorant of the ways of society. From a nobleman one would expect some knowledge of the world; one would find 'a common count' more conversant with politeness and the rules of society than you have shown yourself in your last literary effort. . . . I will say no more on this subject, since both of us have passed the time of life when any improvement can be looked for. I am quite indifferent to your opinion of me. If it be bad, it does not trouble me; if it be good, I am not flattered."

He requests that there may be no further correspondence. "It is necessary for me to insist upon this point, for although you say that it is your last word, I know well what weight to give to your assurances, and this reminder is by no means out of place."

After some more of this rude style of letter-writing, he goes on: "If you want to know the truth about the two women you shall have it. The prison authorities put on their prison list that Hélène Knitschanin was hanged one morning in Belgrade, and Hélène Markovitch was *found* in her cell at Posereven, strangled. You may desire explanation—you shall have it. The facts are that Hélène Markovitch was found dead after she had been condemned

by the judges of the land to twenty years' imprisonment, and that, *by the mercy of her judges*, she died in the Posereven institution, over which I have *no control*. It is also true that Hélène Knitschanin was found strangled in her cell in the prison of Belgrade Castle while under military surveillance, but I was far away in the south of France, spending my holiday. This is another fact. It is also true that at the same time a soldier who held the night watch was found dead, and that by the finding of the military jury this was certified as sudden death. This is also a fact. I can give you the dates of each occurrence."

He winds up this very extraordinary communication with an announcement that he will resign all the offices he holds by the King's pleasure, and which were principally about the person of the young King, and that this resignation will be made to the Skupshtina when it meets.

The régime of Nikola Christitch (to whom Milan had entrusted the conduct of the proceedings against the Queen) had deprived the King of his last vestige of popularity ; the army was all that now remained faithful to him. The iron hand of Christitch pressed heavily on the country, which was kept from all intercourse with other countries. A frightful tyranny, on the lines of, and almost as bad as, the Inquisition, was inaugurated. Every letter and parcel was subjected to strict investigation ; letters were destroyed

recklessly; parcels and enclosures of money never reached their destination, any inquiries made being visited with imprisonment. Foreign newspapers were confiscated wholesale if they contained any allusion to the divorce proceedings. Belgrade was like a besieged capital, the police exercising stern supervision, and any demonstration in favour of the Queen being suppressed with great severity. In the interior of the country bands of robbers appeared, this being always the case in Servia during any period of political agitation. The whole country was seething with excitement, all the more dangerous from being kept down by the strong arm of the Government. In Belgrade the troops were under orders to be ready for any emergency: a crisis was imminent. No one, however, could have imagined what then actually happened.

Alarmed at the general irritation, and seeing that he had lost all popularity with his subjects, Milan suddenly surprised his ministers by announcing his intention to abdicate. He gave Servia a liberal constitution, and on March 22nd, 1889, laid down his crown in favour of his son Alexander, then a boy of twelve years old. During the Prince's minority the government of the country was placed in the hands of a three-headed Regency—Ristisch, Protitsch, and Beli-Markovitch. Milan's worst enemies, the Radicals, were likewise called upon by the King to form part of the government of the country.

This sudden step caused the utmost astonishment, but it did not produce the effect the King had expected. He had an abiding confidence that the Servians could not dispense with his strong hand to guide them. "He had in his mind," says one writer, "the history of his ancestor, Milosch, who was twice driven into exile and brought back by the wish of the people." At the audience Milan gave to the German and Austrian ambassadors on the day of his departure from Belgrade he said that he should speedily be recalled, and the ambassadors shared his opinion. No one, in fact, believed that King Milan, then in his thirty-fourth year, had played the part of ruler for the last time.

Volumes have been written as to the causes which brought about this sudden change in the politics of Servia, and the most extraordinary explanations have been given. It was, however, well known to the ministers and Milan's intimate friends that after the fearful experience of political life which the King had tasted, he longed with intense desire for the peaceful life of a private individual. Moreover, his act would, he thought, ensure to his son the crown of Servia, which otherwise might be put in jeopardy through his (Milan's) unpopularity and the unfortunate conditions of his married life. It is allowed by dispassionate writers on this subject that parental anxiety for his son's future *did* influence Milan in

some degree; but it is to be feared that the nature of the King, which was at all times intensely selfish, could not have risen from the mud of its surroundings to anything approaching self-sacrifice, which belongs to the higher order of virtues. He knew, however, that his day was over, and that his only chance of enjoying life, as he conceived it, lay in placing the boy-Prince on the throne of Servia.[1]

These were the motives which influenced King Milan in the matter of his resignation. That his sacrifice should not have brought about the results he expected was not his fault, but that of the Servians.

The provision made for King Milan was by no means extravagant, the income settled on him being three millions of francs, about £120,000 of our money. Likewise (and this is to be remembered) the Regents undertook the duty of arranging Milan's financial difficulties, Milan on his side surrendering all rights to any property he was possessed of in or out of Servia. The most immediate and pressing of his debts Milan paid out of his own purse.

Milan had to resign for ever all rights to be a member of the reigning House of Servia, as well as any claim to the hereditary office of King. In

[1] Another reason which influenced Milan was his hatred of Natalie. Those who knew him well were aware of the intensity of this hate, which would have made him agree to any self-sacrifice that would entail humiliation upon her. The Regents had to promise that she should be banished from Servia.

addition, he was to resign all his military appointments, these demands being justified by the unsettled condition of the nation, which was in constant expectation of the ex-King's return to his former place on the throne, and while this agitation, which was injurious to the country, lasted, there was no hope of the tranquillity which alone could restore prosperity to Servia.

Milan was well aware that the ministers encouraged this agitation for their own purposes. Nevertheless, in order to fill his purse—or, as his friends say, to preserve the throne for his son—Milan agreed to the terms of the Regents, and signed an agreement by which he should on a certain date divest himself of all his honours. His friends represent this act as a noble sacrifice, the only parallel to which is to be found in Roman history ; but I do not suppose anyone will be found to agree with this high-flown assertion.

Milan grasped his position, and knew perfectly that if he did not agree to the ministerial proposals, he would lose his only chance of leading the life of pleasure and ease to enjoy which he had gladly sacrificed his crown. He probably realised, also, that a refusal on his part would imperil the future of the Obrenovitch dynasty, and might lead to its final overthrow.

It was, of course, obvious that Milan would now

make his home in Paris; he had spent the days of his youth there, had troops of friends, and was liked by all classes. It was most natural he should settle amongst the friendly and gay Parisians. It was also fitting that, although throneless, he should have an establishment conformable to his station.

This, however, was not the view taken by the ex-King's enemies. They set all manner of reports flying as to the luxury and extravagant arrangements of Milan's house in Paris, these exaggerated tales being denied by all sensible people, who saw nothing in Milan's establishment which resembled "fairy-land." It will be remembered by readers of Wagner's life that this same calumny was started about *his* luxurious dwelling-house in Munich. Milan's bachelor residence was not the most luxurious ever seen in Paris, but it was a residence befitting a monarch, who does not necessarily become a pauper because he ceases to be a King. The Parisians liked the "jolly King," who, in laying down his crown, had shaken off all the trammels of royalty. His familiar figure was to be seen daily, as he rode or drove in the Bois, enjoyed the different theatres, or dined with a party of friends at Verrey's, where his somewhat rough manner and coarse jokes, his flashy dress, etc., caused him to be sometimes mistaken for a *parvenu*. But the waiters, who knew and

liked His Majesty, would correct this mistake, whispering to the stranger, "That gentleman with the dark moustache is Milan, ex-King of Servia."

And this passing tribute was all that remained of what had promised to be a brilliant career.

When Milan settled down to his new life he resolved to turn over a new leaf. His financial outlook was not very brilliant; the settlement with his most pressing creditors had made a great hole in the first instalment of his annual income; his setting up in his new establishment had also to be paid for, so that, as Beau Brummell once said, "there is nothing so expensive as being out of debt." Milan, however, was a long way off from this condition of affairs. After the payment of the long-standing accounts already mentioned and the expense of furnishing, etc., he had not much left of the three million francs, and at every moment fresh creditors appeared. It seemed hopeless work, somewhat akin to the task of Sisyphus.

Milan's financial bankruptcy began to be talked about in Paris. In the French capital nothing is very long a secret. The consequence was that he was besieged by bankers, financiers, money-lenders, money-changers, speculators, and *escrocs*. Each of these had a scheme which was sure to make the speculator's fortune. Milan was too wide awake to listen to this jargon. He ordered these touts out of his house. Neverthe-

less, he lent a willing ear to the more dangerous, because more insidious, financial agent, the man who could put him into a good thing, and who had been the adviser of Prince ——, or His Majesty ——. The King had always dabbled in speculation, but now he became a confirmed gambler—not with dice or cards (although he had his fling there also), but with his whole fortune, and, as is often the case, he had luck, at least in the beginning.

When this news reached Belgrade, the papers shrieked at him, denouncing him as a gambler and worse. Milan, however, was content to bear these attacks so long as he was able to keep his head above water. The ministers in Belgrade left the King to his own devices and did not send him the money they had covenanted to pay him. Milan's creditors, getting wind of this, grew more urgent for payment.

In Belgrade, where any kind of gossip concerning the exiled King was eagerly received, it was said that Milan was daily in the habit of filling both his hands with gold pieces and throwing these to the mob which daily took its place under the windows of his house. A wise mob, certainly, and a foolish King! If this *canard* was true, he was fit for a mad asylum. But the story was too ridiculous for belief. However, we all know the proverb of any stick being good enough, etc. This tale would not be worth repeating,

were it not that it shows the venomous character and determined hatred of his enemies, who desired to prejudice the Servian Government against him, and so deprive him of the income settled upon him. The settlement made on Milan was, as we are aware, three million of francs : not a large sum for one who had been a King. But the Regents had also agreed to pay his outstanding debts and to put his affairs in order, which important condition they now seemed inclined to shirk. This undoubtedly gives a colour to what his friends (and Milan had devoted friends) have always maintained, that Milan's enemies (and no man had more) desired not only his abdication and his exile, but, likewise, his total ruin. On the other hand, Milan's debts amounted to a large sum, more than a poor country like Servia could well afford to pay at once, and it was stipulated that a certain time should be allowed for the payment, this fact being overlooked by those who accuse the Regents of disloyalty in the matter of their signed agreement to discharge the King's debts. These ardent partisans go so far as to say that there was a party of Milan's enemies who would have enjoyed seeing him, the ex-King of Servia, without a roof over his head or sufficient food to keep him alive. It was a thorn in the side of these persons that Milan, although he had lost his throne and was an exile from his country, nevertheless lived as a King should, and was treated

as such by his contemporaries. It was, therefore, made clear to Milan, as well as to all who could read these evidences rightly, that his downfall had not been brought about solely by his own conduct, or his consequent unpopularity, but was a personal matter. What had caused this unpopularity is another question. Milan, it must be confessed, did not possess the virtues which would have earned him the respect and love of his subjects; his faults belonged to the worst category of human degeneracy, and his virtues (if you could call by this high-sounding name merely natural qualities which are to be found in the animal creation) had all the fitfulness, the uncertainty and want of steadiness which divide the pagan from the Christian. I think we may safely say that Milan, to all intents and purposes, was nothing but a pagan, yet this would hardly account for the hatred of him felt by a great number of his subjects, a hatred which had its root in their own personality, which had suffered in some way, either from Milan's neglect or from his injustice.

Few of us, the great as well as the lowly, the rich as well as the poor, can pass through life without making enemies, and in Milan's twenty years of reign he had ample opportunity to make hundreds, in Servia especially, where every soldier thinks he should be a general, every clerk imagines he should be a

minister, and where every peasant considers he should be a county judge and a deputy, with a seat in the time-honoured Skupshtina. Again, during his twenty years' reign, how many hopes had Milan crushed, how many susceptibilities had he wounded! And it was from this multitude of disappointed placemen and injured aspirants to fame that the army of enemies which ranged itself against the King was recruited. Nor was this war undertaken in a fair or moderate spirit; it was a war of revenge, in which the enemy would not rest until the offender had been stretched dead before his implacable foe.

Milan, who, although he was furnished with many good gifts, lacked a keen perception, did not reckon sufficiently with the vindictive spirit which filled the hearts of so many of his late subjects. He really was foolish enough to believe that the sacrifice he had made by abdicating in his son's favour was full compensation for all the injuries he might have inflicted on certain individuals during his reign, this being a proof that he took an entirely wrong view of the character of the people whom he had governed for so many years.

Milan, as we are already aware, had resolved to start his new life on totally different lines from what had hitherto been his manner of living. The condition, however, of his finances was not encouraging. He had paid off the most pressing of his creditors

at the sacrifice of the greater portion of the three millions of francs, but there still remained a large amount of debts which had to be liquidated (according to the agreement between Milan and the Regents) out of the Civil List. The ex-King, therefore, was justified in considering he had no further responsibility in the matter, and that he might look forward to a peaceful future. This prospect, however, was not realised. The Regents did not fulfil their contract by paying their share from the Civil List, and in face of the clamour made by his creditors Milan had again to draw on what was left of the three millions, which now dwindled to a small balance.

For some time Milan managed to keep his head above water by means of speculations. In the end, however, as is generally the case with such dangerous experiments, the ex-King found the net closing round him ; his creditors became more and more pressing, and every day the difficulty of extrication increased. His pressing demand that the Regents, and especially his old friend Dr. Jovan Ristisch, would give the order that the annuity he had stipulated for should be paid to him was answered by excuses which were *bonâ fide*, as at this period the financial condition of Servia was bordering on bankruptcy. Milan's position in Paris became distinctly unpleasant. His letters to Dr. Ristisch grew more pressing ; he threatened to come to Belgrade and make it very hot for the

Regents. Ristisch, who was as sly as an old fox, knew how to manage his former pupil, and by a mixture of threats and promises quieted the wrath of the angry King. And when these measures failed, as they did in the end, the ministers sent a confidential agent to Paris, who was clever enough to persuade the ex-King that his affairs would speedily be settled.

In the meantime the political situation in Servia was charged with ever-increasing difficulties. Queen Natalie, who, like her separated Consort, lived abroad, and only came twice a year to pay a short visit to Belgrade, now threw aside this agreement, and wrote to the Regents announcing her determination to return to Belgrade and settle there permanently. The Press at once began to set paid agitators to work, and to renew the struggle which had made Servia a byword throughout Europe. It seemed indeed as if Milan's abdication had been a fruitless sacrifice, and that the contest was to begin afresh, while the chain which connected him with the political struggles of his kingdom had been merely loosened, but had not been broken.

This was proved by what presently happened. In the month of June, 1889, the Servian Representative in Paris, Herr Mika-Georgovitch, appeared at Milan's house in the early hours of the morning. The King was in bed, but hearing there was pressing necessity,

admitted Georgovitch to his room, who showed the King a private letter from Dr. Jovan Ristisch, full of complaints of the conduct of the then minister, Sava Gruitch, and entreating that King Milan would come to Belgrade. Ristisch promised that the result of this visit should be the settlement of Milan's financial difficulties. This bait was sure to attract the King, whose want of money was becoming critical; but, on the other hand, he suspected Ristisch, and his suspicions were increased by what he heard of the popular feeling against himself which still reigned in Belgrade. He therefore sent a private telegram to the other Regent, Protitsch, and on receiving a reassuring answer, set off for Belgrade, where his energetic counsels were listened to partly, it was said, from the dread that if he was opposed he would resume the reins of government, which was the last thing the Regents would have relished. For the rest, the King got his way, and the Regents had to promise that the Queen should be forced to keep to the terms of the document she had signed, and that if she infringed them she should be banished from Servia. Milan also signed a second deed of abdication, which contained stronger and more binding clauses than the first hastily drawn up agreement. Milan, however, remained the guest of his son at Belgrade until the late autumn. He had two objects in remaining: he would not leave unless

the terms agreed upon were signed and sealed, for he knew the men he had to deal with. Likewise, living as he did in the palace, he economised, and what he put by would help him more fully to enjoy his Parisian home.

The continued animosity which pursued Milan, even in his retirement, was a convincing proof to the King (if he wanted proof) that the hate of his enemies would never relax. These same men had hated him as a boy, and had gone on hating him all through the twenty years of his reign, and their hatred, as was now distinctly proved, was not only political, but also personal.

Milan had never gauged the length and breadth of this animosity. He believed that his abdication had removed all ill-feeling, but he had to learn the lesson that there are some who never forgive. It must be confessed that it was hard for a man to have sacrificed crown and kingdom to satisfy his enemies and to find them quite as rabid, if not more so, than before. It was, indeed, a strange experience!

Who could have imagined that such would have been the result of the quarrel between husband and wife? It is hard to say which was the most in fault. Milan, no doubt, was the original offender, but, as in all domestic quarrels, there were faults on both sides. The Queen was proud and inclined to jealousy, and it

has been said by those who knew both husband and wife intimately that after a dispute between the royal pair the Queen would lock herself up in her room, while Milan stood for hours outside the door, imploring admittance.

So far as one can judge without any personal knowledge, Russia seems to have played a great part in this domestic drama. If Natalie had kept up no correspondence with Russia, her domestic life might have been happier. Whether she did so to the extent which has been reported is one of many political secrets which are now hidden in the secret archives of St. Petersburg. Some day, a hundred years hence, they may form part of some important historical work.

The Queen was at Yalta, where she had been spending some time, when the news of the King's abdication reached her. The first news came to her through Herr Dokitsch, the young King's tutor, who, curiously enough, addresses his letters to "*Frau Natalie Ketschko.*"

The letter runs thus :—

"In a manifesto to the nation His Majesty King Milan has abdicated in favour of his son Alexander, who is from this day *de facto* King of Servia, and has been proclaimed Alexander I. The Regents during His Majesty's minority have been appointed ; they are Herr Johann Ristisch and Generals Con-

stantine Protitsch and Beli-Markovitch. By the command of His Majesty King Milan, I am instructed to bring this matter to your notice.

"DR. DOKITSCH,
"*Tutor to the King.*"

At the same time, or a little later, the Regents despatched Monsieur Wasseljevitch to Yalta in the character of delegate to the Queen. It was evidently their wish to pay deference to the young King's mother, and it would appear that the Queen's friends tried to impress this fact upon her. "I beg your Majesty," writes one of these (Bosilla), "to have patience and to receive with *every confidence* the envoy sent by the Regents to confer with you. To these men is entrusted the destiny of Servia and the guardianship of your son."

The Queen wrote to the Regents in a very friendly manner, expressing herself properly as regarded her royal husband. She says pathetically "that to be reunited to her son will be the greatest happiness which God could give her."

Attached to this letter were some remarks in tabulated order :—

"(1) The Queen, understanding the great difficulties which surround the Regents at this moment, will do all in her power to lighten the work they have to do by giving no cause for vexatious struggles.

"(2) Since neither the Regents nor King Milan would look favourably on the Queen's occupation of the royal palace, the Queen proposes to rent a villa at Topfschider, which she will occupy on her return to Belgrade. This return will not be for some time, as it would be dangerous to go too suddenly from a warm climate (such as she is enjoying here) to a colder temperature."

Wasseljevitch, who seems to have been a friend to all parties, writes to the Queen that everything is going on well. King Milan had left Belgrade on February 17th, and was on his way to Constantinople; from thence he was to go to the East. "I had an audience," he continues, "of the King your son. I presented him with your letter, and he inquired after your health. I told him you were enjoying good health, but that I did not know when you would leave Yalta."

The accounts the Queen received from her friends in Belgrade were not very reassuring. The network of intrigue which surrounded the boy-King did not give foundation for much confidence in the new *régime* in Servia. The influence of Russia was sure to predominate, and in addition to the return of the Queen, the Metropolitan Michael, who had been banished from the kingdom by Milan, was now invited to return.

The Queen's letter to him gives one an idea of the real position of affairs. She writes from Yalta, and begins her letter with hearty congratulations on his return; then she speaks of her longing to be with her son, but she goes on: "The constant struggle which I have carried on has exhausted my strength, and, unless I have permission from the Regents, I shall not return to Servia, and this permission is, I think, doubtful. These gentlemen have sent me by Monsieur Wasseljevitch numberless pretty messages couched in charming phrases, but I confess to your Eminence that I have lost all confidence in political men. Perhaps it is wrong to be so incredulous, but I have lived in a network of lies and deceit, and now I find it difficult to believe in anything or anyone. The greatest happiness life could offer to me would be to preside over the education of my son, and if God would have compassion on me, He would not refuse this blessing to me. It appears, however, that there is an article in the new constitution which forbids my interference, and furthermore enacts that I am on no account to dwell in the same house as my only child. To-day, as in many heavy trials in my life, I have placed my case in the hands of the One who never deserts those who put their sole trust in Him.

"Your Eminence has no doubt been informed of all that has happened, but, monseigneur, what appears

in the newspapers bears little relation to the actual truth. Will your Eminence allow me to send you (in strict confidence) copies of all the documents as well as the truthful account of what has happened in Servia? May I also beg of you to mention me in your prayers, and receive from me the assurance of the deep respect, with which I am, etcetera,

"NATALIE."

CHAPTER VIII

IN midsummer of the year 1889 the Queen-mother attained her heart's desire. She came to Belgrade. She had conquered all difficulties, and a short telegram to the Regents informed them that she was on her way from Russia to Belgrade. Short as the time was, the ministers despatched a member of the Government to meet Her Majesty, who was to place before her the wishes of her best friends, and was to use every effort to turn her from this foolish scheme.

This confidential agent met the Queen at Bukarest. He laid before her the conditions to which she would have to agree if she pursued her intention of coming to Belgrade, where, if she accepted the terms, she would be received with a royal welcome. She would be received at the Castle as the guest of her son on the same conditions as had been agreed to by King Milan—*i.e.* that her permanent residence should be abroad, and only twice a year should she visit her son the King for three or four weeks.

The Queen-mother would not submit to any con-

ditions. She simply laughed in the official's face, and declared she would continue her journey to Belgrade. Let him stop her if he dared!

"Then," said the agent, "your Majesty will not, I fear, see your son." Upon this Natalie, in a voice trembling with passion, exclaimed, "I should like to see who will dare to prevent a mother from seeing her child!"

The Queen continued her journey and arrived in Belgrade. "It was a sultry day, and the mind of everyone in Belgrade was full of anxiety and expectation as to what would happen. Reports of all kinds were spread abroad. It was said that the entire way from the landing-stage on the Save River to the royal Castle was strewn with flowers and ornamented with garlands and festoons of gay colour. Also that the people were coming in their hundreds, and would take the horses from the Queen's carriage and drag their beloved mistress to her son's Castle.

By midday the shore of the Save as well as the well-known promenade round the fortress was filled to overflowing by a mass of spectators, while later on the streets in the Save quarter were likewise filled with crowds which rendered all traffic impossible. The peasants stood shoulder to shoulder, rubbing against the richly dressed ladies and the gentlemen in those tightly fitting frock-coats and glossy hats that are never worn by Englishmen.

Queen Natalie at the Age of 30.

page 218.

All the *fine fleur* of Belgrade society were gathered here, gaping like the *bourgeoisie*,—for all the world, high and low, wanted to see Queen Natalie.

At five o'clock there arose that mysterious excitement which thrills a multitude, and by which we know that the great moment is approaching. Then the air was filled with the noisy, screaming cry, "Zivela Rufe!" which came from the far-distant rocks to announce that the ship which brought the Queen to her beloved Servians was in sight. Louder and louder, more and more piercing rose the shrieking. A kind of wild, spasmodic movement agitated the mass of people, and with difficulty a narrow path was made for the Queen's carriage, which was driven to the landing-stage.

No officials had come to greet the Queen; some members of the foreign legations represented friendly countries, and one or two ministerial functionaries of no importance represented Servia. This holding back of those in high places was noticed by the representatives of other countries, and bore fruit the day after Natalie's arrival. The representatives of Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, etc., only left cards for Her Majesty; the only one who made a personal call was Monsieur Persiani, who represented Russia.

The Queen-mother stepped on shore with a proud air. She had conquered all opposition; she was in

the land of her adoption, which held what was her dearest possession on earth—Sacha, her son. But as she looked round she must have felt that this was not the welcome that she should have had. The people, indeed, crowded round her, the shrill cry of welcome was screamed by a thousand voices, but there was no other greeting. No flowers were strewn before her, there were no triumphal arches, and, worst of all, there was no friendly hand to take hers, and no one to say words of kindly welcome. She sat in her carriage and drove through the streets past the Castle where her only child dwelt, and where all was silent. No sign of welcome greeted her, his mother! The soldiers on guard walked up and down in their usual measured fashion, but they took no heed of the carriage passing, nor of the crowd following, although each soldier knew that the crowd was doing honour to the Queen-mother, and emphasising the cruel reception ordered by the Regents. The guard at the Castle gate had been doubled, and the Regents were with the King in order to prevent any demonstration on his side in favour of his mother.

The Queen, although she had arrived in Belgrade, and had been warmly welcomed by the populace and her own friends, had not as yet attained the object of her heart's desire, namely, to see her son. She had written letters of the most injudicious

character to the boy-King, advising him to cut the leading-strings in which he was kept, together with other foolish suggestions as to what course he should pursue. The youthful monarch was placed between two fires, and did not know which side he should take, that of his father or that of his mother. The Regents were, therefore, in a critical position. They noticed with surprise the efforts the young King made to subdue his emotion when the shouts and boisterous voices of the people reached his ears. He knew well what it meant: the Servians were showing their joy at seeing their Queen, while her son sat silent as she passed. Nevertheless, he restrained his feelings, remaining cold as marble, still as the grave. But when all had passed and silence reigned in the Castle, the pride of his youthful heart gave way: he craved to see his mother, and this craving was stimulated by her constant letters, her pleadings, her reproaches. The tension was becoming too great; the King was falling ill with desire to see Natalie. And then, and not till then, did the Regents relax. A message was sent to Milan, then in Paris, to entreat his permission that the mother and son might meet, and still Milan refused to change his orders. He did so only when it was represented to him that it was the desire of the young King, and that no one liked to take it upon themselves to hinder him, as he would never forgive those who kept him from so natural a

duty. Then, and not till then, did Milan telegraph :—

"To the King's Regents.

"If you can reconcile it with your plighted word and your manly dignity, then, yes."

The Queen's enemies had shown a mixture of weakness and subservience which recoiled upon themselves. Encouraged by her triumph, the Queen rejected all the efforts of friendly peacemakers who essayed to make some sort of arrangement. They soon found they would have to retreat inch by inch, while the Queen, who was not over-scrupulous in her methods, gained followers daily. In her letters to her son she sought to blacken the character of his father, and she represented every action of the Regents in the worst possible light. Her letters to those guardians of the country and also to her son were full of the most violent abuse, often of a personal character. Nor did she disdain to make use of the Belgrade Press in order to defame her enemies, whom she accused of impeding the education of the King, of demoralising his character, of injuring his health, and of withdrawing, by means of calumnies, his affection from her, his mother. She likewise organised a violent campaign against Milan, the consequence of this being that each day some fierce attack was made upon the ex-King in the papers.

Milan took no notice of these attacks; he wisely left the matter to time, which rights most things.

The Queen was soon to feel that the favour of the populace is as changeable as a summer day. There is an admirable French saying which applies to many circumstances in life, "*Surtout pas trop de zèle.*" It is quite true; you may be too zealous in praising your friend and in abusing your enemy, and Natalie fell into this last error. She overstated her case. As her son the King remarked: "My father acts more nobly, for he never says an unkind word of my mother."

The Queen had now to acknowledge that her visit had been unsuccessful. She had gained nothing by coming to Belgrade. What she wanted she had not got, and that was, in the first place, to superintend the King's education, both religious and secular, the first-named being scandalously neglected.[1]

This was a very natural wish, and one must acknowledge her right to express it and to have it granted. Unfortunately, her position with regard to Milan came in the way. To place the Queen in the position she desired would have been to set aside the rights of the father, which would have been illegal.

[1] According to most trustworthy authority, the Regents were much to blame for the manner in which the Prince was educated. Although only a few years removed from childhood, he was already initiated into the vices of the day. It was no wonder that the Queen raised her voice against such teachers of youth as these men were.

Natalie should have known, and probably did know, the legal side of this question, but she wanted to agitate; she tried her luck and failed.

She had, however, another card up her sleeve, which she now played. This was to get the Skupshtina to annul the divorce proceedings and to allow her to live in the Castle of Belgrade with her son. This, too, was refused, it being considered a very outrageous request, as it reflected upon the Regency, which up to the present had been supposed to do its duty. Even the Radicals, who had taken the side of the Queen, were irritated by this departure, and pronounced her petition to be absolutely out of all reason, the point being that the Skupshtina had no right to decide such a question as the Queen had placed before them, and that by so doing she had lowered the dignity of the Royal House.

The Queen, however, who was possessed of extraordinary firmness (one might call it by another name), would not withdraw her petition, and continued to push forward her proposals, with the assistance of the progressive party, headed by Milutin Garaschanin and the Servian poet, Dragulin Ilia. The *pourparlers* were endless, and were at last broken off by the Queen declining every proposal. When advised by the Regents to go to Bukarest, she refused, saying she had not money enough. The Regents replied that all expenses should be paid out of the King's Civil List. The

Queen then brought forward other pretexts for refusal, and finally broke off the arrangement. She was still hoping that her petition would be favourably received. In the most touching and noble words she had set forth in this petition the story of the sad life which had been the portion of the King's mother. It was a touching appeal, which should have moved the hearts of all who read it; especially was it calculated to rouse the sympathy of the peasants and simple folk who vote in the national Skupshtina.[1]

The impression made by the Queen's petition did not, however, alter the situation. The members, although much impressed, threw it out by a considerable majority, in spite of the fact that many of them were personal enemies of the King, and that nearly every man was deeply moved by the account of the wrong done to the Queen. But the claims of a husband and father, be he peasant or monarch, could not be thrust aside. It was the same for the poorest man as it was for the King, and this right could not be taken from the deposed King. The Servian Parliament, in fact, voted in strict accordance with the law which prevails in every European country.

All these circumstances threw a shadow over

[1] It would take too long to insert this interesting document here, but for those who like to read such documents it will be found among the published State Papers.

Servian society in the year 1891. Everyone felt the gravity of the situation. The Queen was the only person who preserved a tranquil serenity. In her house in the Prince Michael Street she entertained her friends at the most charming dinners, for Natalie was a past mistress in the art of entertaining. She showed herself every afternoon in the streets of Belgrade in her elegant vehicle with the white ponies, or sometimes she walked along, with her pet goat following like a dog. She was a constant visitor to the skating rink, and lost no opportunity of making friends and securing popular favour.

Often she would pick out some poor child who looked hungry or forsaken, and, taking it by the hand, would lead it to her house and give it clothes, food, and money, to take back to its parents. By these kind acts, and with her sweet voice and gentle kindness, did Natalie seek to win popularity amongst her son's subjects.

But this was not her only motive. She had a still deeper project. Her desire was to recover the friendship of Russia, which had been lost to her by her refusal to follow advice in the matter of the divorce. She set herself to win over Persiani to her side. Persiani was a red tapist, and followed the instructions he got from Russia to the very letter. Natalie then essayed to get hold of the Russian Press. There was a Russian journalist, by name Peter

PRINCE MICHAEL STREET, BELGRADE, IN WHICH QUEEN NATALIE LIVED.

page 226.

Nebolson, a correspondent of the Russian newspaper *Novo Vremja*. She made a friend of him, and presently articles appeared which were favourable to to her and her intimates and unfavourable to those whom she disliked. Attacks on Milan, on the Regents, on different influential persons in Servia were in the order of the day. No notice was taken of this sudden outburst. It was reported, however, whether truly or not it is hard to say (since, as we know, lying was then much in fashion in Belgrade), that Queen Natalie had given to Herr Nebolson for publication a paper, which, if published, would be very injurious to the Obrenovitch dynasty at this particular juncture. The ministers at once seized Herr Nebolson's papers and expatriated him. His house was searched, but nothing incriminating was found, Herr Nebolson having received through friends timely notice of what was coming, and having carefully concealed all dangerous documents under the flooring of his house. A confidential friend, to whom he had confided this important secret, later on took the documents out of their hiding-place and gave them back to the Queen.

The misfortune which had befallen Herr Nebolson made a great impression in Belgrade, and many people in society thought the Queen-mother should have seen a warning in this affair, as Nebolson, being a Russian, ought to have been protected by Russian

influence. The Queen and her friends, however, exercised very little caution, probably because they had nothing to fear. The Queen threw herself more and more into political agitation. Under her wing committees were formed for the support of the Panslavist union (Belika Serbija), which, being totally impecunious, shortly allied itself with the party of progress. The Queen-mother was soon at war with the Regents, who at this time were the highest authority in Servia, representing, as they did, the Crown itself. Herr Ristisch, who was well acquainted with the Queen's ambitious views, wrote in answer to a letter Natalie had addressed to him. Ristisch was no smoothed-tongued politician; he went straight to the point, and his words have a ring of sincerity which is undoubtedly convincing.

In her communication the Queen had accused the minister of having since 1887 sacrificed her interests to his own ambitious designs. "Then how comes it," he inquires, "that in September, 1889, before you returned to Belgrade, you wrote these words to me, 'C'est une amie qui vous revient'?"[1] ("your friend returns to you"). After some other remarks he attacks her conduct towards her husband, which he condemns in words of scathing indignation. He

[1] When Natalie came as a girl-bride to Servia the grave minister Ristisch was credited with cherishing a secret passion for Her Majesty, whose mental gifts interested the minister, while her girlish

tells her plainly: "Your letters are full of unwomanly denunciations, altogether forgetting that if King Milan has sinned against you, you have not done your duty towards him. Even granting that the King deserves your reproaches, surely it is the part of the wife to forgive, and pre-eminently the office of the mother to uphold the father of her child, and not to drag his name in the very dirt and expose all his failings to public condemnation. This is not the conduct one would have expected from the daughter of Landowner Ketschko towards an Obrenovitch, who had raised her from her insignificant position to share his throne.[1] For the rest, I had no share in your Majesty's elevation to the rank of Princess of Servia. I frankly confess my views for my Prince rose higher. Neither was I one of those who placed their hopes in your *wonderful talents*. If you had been what your admirers thought you were, you would have easily won the affections of the people of Servia; but this has not been the case. Before your advent in 1875 no such luxury and extravagance had reigned at the Court as has marked the twelve years of your reign. While the best blood of Servia was

charms attracted the man. Even if true this was only a passing incident. In the letter quoted no one could detect any vestige of love; in fact, a little later he became her bitter enemy.

[1] Considering that the sons of *Obren* were not of royal blood, this proud boast seems slightly absurd, and reminds one of Dr. Johnson's comparison between the flea and the——

shed on the battlefield, while the tears of mothers, wives, and sisters flowed, and all around them was mourning and desolation, Queen Natalie *amused* herself with costume dances and entertainments which encouraged extravagance of all kinds. Again, in 1880, I witnessed the efforts King Milan made to curb your extreme love of amusement and your exorbitant expenditure, the like of which had never been known previously in our simple but happy country. The struggle made by the King was fruitless, and ended by his submitting to your stronger will. It was then that the nobility began the dangerous habit, hitherto unknown in our modest capital, of borrowing money at high interest in order to procure the dresses and the jewels which your love of splendour and fashion made indispensable; for, madam, the brilliancy of your Court was allied to that of the French King, Louis XIV. This extravagant display in a poor country like Servia has been a cause of general discontent which did not exist before your Majesty had led the way to the adoption of these modern fashions. It made a great contrast to the sweet humility and the prudence of a high-minded lady in whose veins runs royal blood—I allude to Countess Julie Hunjadi, a lady whose private life and freedom from all coquetry was the admiration of the Servian nation before your pernicious example had corrupted their better sense.

"You have tried to make me dislike King Milan by telling me the unfavourable opinion of me 'which for twelve years he has communicated to different persons, verbally and in writing.' This communication of yours is nothing new. You have heard it for the first time; I have known it for twenty years. This is sufficient proof that my position does not depend upon your Majesty's protection nor on that of the Court, but is supported by the entire nation, and of this I am proud.

"Reading between the lines of your communication, I think I can understand the meaning of some of your suggestions. You talk of having tried to turn King Milan from 'the fatal policy' he has pursued. So far as I know his policy was yours also, and to my own knowledge, although since 1880 you have not signed any documents, you have encouraged your royal husband in his methods of government. I will give one striking proof of your activity in political matters. The case I mean was shortly after the defeat at Slivnitza, and had to do with two European Cabinets. Perhaps you will now recall the incident? But I do not hint, because I do not know, that the affair was due to your initiative. Be that as it may, the course pursued was altogether against the constitution and traditions of Servia. An offer, or a suggestion of an offer, was made to you which was totally in contradiction to the traditions

of the Servian nation. I cannot speak plainly, as that would be betraying international secrets. I will confine myself to reminding you of a suggestion made by a European Cabinet that *you* should be proclaimed Regent of this country. Another Cabinet was, however, opposed to this proposal as 'unacceptable.'

"Your Majesty will pardon my frankness. I regret that these explanations are necessary. You have forced me to speak frankly; there was no other means left of clearing away the misunderstanding and errors in which we were involved.

"I have the honour to be

"Your Majesty's humble servant,

"RISTISCH."

Such a letter as this has seldom been penned to a Queen.

Meantime clouds were gathering on the political horizon, and soon broke out in a storm against the ex-Queen. When the Skupshtina met one of the subjects debated was that in view of the interests of the country and the preservation of the throne, it was necessary that during the minority of the King of Servia his parents, the ex-King and ex-Queen, should live out of the kingdom of Servia. It became, therefore, the duty of the members of the Skupshtina (as the interpreters of the wishes of the

people) to demand of the Government that the necessary steps should be taken to preserve to the throne all its rights, and do this duty unflinchingly, whatever the cost.

This very clear setting forth of the wishes of the people should have been enough for Queen Natalie. After all, there were only a few years to pass, and her son would be master of the situation. Natalie, however, was not a woman endowed with the divine virtue of patience. She laughed at the deputies who brought her a copy of the decree of banishment, refusing between the explosions of her mirth to obey such a simply ridiculous order. It was in vain that the gravest and most dignified of the deputies essayed to reason with the Queen, who, while keeping her temper wonderfully, seemed to take the whole affair in the light of a joke.

The Regents showed admirable patience with the royal lady's humour, and seeing that she would not listen to either their advice or that of her own intimates, they sent for the Count Hunjadi, hoping that his influence might bring the Queen to a more proper state of mind.

"Count Hunjadi belonged," we are told, "to that ancient race of magnates whose simple name carries with it a certain weight. He was allied *by bonds of friendship* to the reigning house. He now came as the guest of the young King, and was received with

every honourable distinction. During his stay of two days he won the friendship of all who came in contact with him, but with regard to its main object his visit was an utter failure. The Queen would listen neither to the advice of her friends nor to the threats of her enemies.

Easter is the great festival of the Greek Church, and on the festival day King Alexander visited his royal mother, and entreated her in the interests of the country to comply with the demand made by the Regents. The Queen's answer was, "The Skupshtina has never notified to me the resolutions passed."

Immediately on hearing this complaint the minister, President Pastisch, together with the Minister of the Interior, Herr Gjaja, waited on the Queen, and presented her with a copy of the resolutions.

The Queen looked over the Act with an indifferent air, and to the entreaty of both ministers that Her Majesty would comply with what was therein set down, and submit to the conditions imposed by the Skupshtina, she replied determinedly, "I yield only to force."

"What does your Majesty mean by force? Is not this resolution sufficiently forcible?" asked Minister Gjaja.

"No!" exclaimed the Queen quickly; "what I understand by force is when I am expelled, by your orders, at the hands of the police."

Both ministers then took leave, shrugging their shoulders. At the same time their last word was to entreat the Queen to reconsider the position.

Two days later Natalie sent the same answer: "I yield only to force."

It may be fairly credited that she never believed the Regents would dare to put in action the threat to remove her by force. She soon found how completely she had deceived herself.

The written answer of the Queen was kept secret, and all the preparations for her expulsion from the country were quietly made. On the 11th May, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Prefect of Belgrade, Monsieur Theodorovitch, waited on Her Majesty, and served the order for her expulsion. The Queen-mother was terribly upset; she had never for a moment believed they would have dared so to insult her. Rallying after an interval, she desired to see some of her friends, a request which was immediately complied with, and her friends were soon with her. She had various other wishes, which were likewise granted, Monsieur Theodorovitch refusing none of her requests, many of these being simply pretexts to gain time, as he had to send on every occasion to the Ministerial Office to get the proper sanction. The answer he received was laconic: "Obey the orders you got."

The whole town was now in possession of the news

of the Queen's arrest and immediate expulsion. It caused considerable excitement. At four o'clock the Prefect of Police gave the order to seize the Queen, as she positively refused to leave the house of her own accord. When the police took forcible hold of the weeping, agitated Queen, General Hoslatovitch, one of her warmest supporters, shrieked out: "I am witness that force has been used to the mother of the King!"

The general public, as well as many persons in the inner and upper circles of Belgrade society, had not the least idea of the scene going on in St. Michael's Place. That a large body of police were on guard in the Obrenovitch Street and also in St. Michael's Place roused no suspicion—at all events, at first.

"At two o'clock," writes an eye-witness of the scene, "I happened to be in Prince Michael Street, in the neighbourhood of Queen Natalie's house. All traffic was suspended, and here, as well as in the adjoining streets, a continuously increasing crowd was gathering from all parts of the city. People said below their breath that the Queen-mother was going to be expelled by force, and discussed the for and against of this high-handed proceeding. The ministers had assembled at the office of the Foreign Minister, and there was no getting any trustworthy information. At the same time the order

of expulsion was served on the Queen-mother, an order which was to be carried out with all despatch. The Queen sent at once for the Master of Ceremonies, Colonel Simenovitch. From this period the crowd increased every moment, and the news that their once beloved Queen was about to be expelled began to circulate freely through the city. Not one even of her female friends had up to this moment the slightest idea that such a step was in contemplation, and now they all rushed to take a farewell of their loved Queen. The entrance to the house was, however, guarded ; there were soldiers and mounted police on duty, and no one was allowed to enter."

King Milan had always called the Queen's female friends "hysterical women," and on this occasion they seemed to have deserved the name. By all accounts their conduct was, to say the least, ill considered. They besieged the soldiers with threats of punishment and entreaties to let them pass ; they called on the name of the Queen, bestowing all manner of endearments on her. Mademoiselle Stana Bogicevitch, who was not allowed entrance, behaved like a mad woman ; force had to be used to remove her from the scene.

Several of the Queen's personal attendants were weeping copiously. The mob, on the other hand, seemed inclined to make merry over these excited damsels. There was as yet no outward sign given (by

the crowd) of sympathy with the ex-Queen. One would have said, "This is real indifference," and yet it would have been a rash judgment. The police, however, well as they should have known their Servians, were deceived by the coolness shown by the mob, and the carriage which was to convey the ex-Queen to the Save was escorted by only twelve men, a proof of how the quiet attitude of the people had imposed upon the guardians of peace and order. Presently, however, the credulity of these time-seasoned custodians was demonstrated in an unpleasant manner.

The Queen's carriage, in which she was already seated, appeared, followed by two cabs, in which were her attendants and her hurriedly packed wardrobe. This cortège was followed by a handful of police officers, and now the hitherto quiet, inoffensive mob were suddenly roused into life and action. They made a rush for the carriage ; some seized the horses' heads and tore the driver from his seat; others forced the carriage door, and dragged the Queen, who was sitting backwards, out ; while the air resounded with "Zivela Rufe!" The six men who were riding in front of the Queen's carriage now returned and charged the mob, who at first fell back, but as the first blow of a heavy stick fell upon the police, the fight began. Stones fell like hail. The friends of the Queen gathered round her and forced

her into her carriage. Natalie, who was deeply moved, pressed the hands of the men, kissed the women, embracing some of them. The small force of police behaved courageously; they forced a road for the carriage, and in a few minutes the Queen was driven down Topfschider Street. This route had been chosen in order not to pass the young King's residence. From there it was not far to the harbour, where the steamer *Deligrad* was puffing away, ready to start. But behind the Queen's carriage and round the carriage windows were the mob, screaming their "Zivela Rufe!" in the Queen's ears. There would be no sailing for the *Deligrad* this afternoon, that was pretty certain, "for now, for the first time, a serious conflict took place between the mob and the police. The police drew their leather thongs or straps, and belaboured the people who had gathered round the Queen's carriage, until, bruised and cut, the Queen's rescuers slowly gave way, and the road was free. Off went the horses at a gallop until the hotel, "The Servian Crown," was reached.

"The Servian Crown" stands in a large open "Platz," or square, opposite to the Cathedral (or Kalimegdan). Here a formidable crowd had gathered, for the most part youths and boys. The hotel had lately been newly plastered, and in the neighbourhood a heap of small stones which had been used for the plastering were heaped up. These now came handy to the

Queen's defenders. The mob—men, women, and children—set to with a will. A rain of small stones was showered upon the luckless police, who, after a peppering of some duration, retired to their barracks. Amidst a wild scene of excitement, with cries of "Zivela Kraljiza-rufen!" from the throats of women and children, the horses were taken from the carriage, which was drawn by the people in triumphant progress through Prince Michael Street, past the palace where the young King lived, and back to the Queen's residence. An immense mob surged into the Queen's house.

During the drive from the hotel, "The Servian Crown," to her own house in Prince Michael Street the ex-Queen lay motionless on the cushions of her carriage, her eyes closed and her face deadly white.

The military in all the barracks were under orders. The dragoons, infantry, and police turned out. The whole quarter in and about Prince Michael Street was under military supervision. Presently fresh disturbances took place outside the Queen's house, and the military fired on the mob. At the Ministerial Office confusion and dismay reigned. No one had expected such tragic consequences to arise from the Regents' policy, and for the moment the Regents themselves seemed paralysed. All the windows in Ristisch's house had been broken. The Regents

were, however, beginning to recover from the first shock, and took a firm stand. The banishment of the Queen was not to be given up, but was to be carried through at all costs, and if there was any further attempt at rescue, the troops should fire on the people.

The news now came that the mob were on their way to the Ministerial Departments, with the intention of setting the buildings on fire and of lynching the Regents. The dragoons and the infantry turned out, with drums beating and trumpets blowing. The Ministerial Offices and the Regents' dwelling-houses were guarded at all points.

At two o'clock that night the Regents were still in the Castle. Belgrade was as if besieged by a foreign enemy. Nothing, however, happened, and the mob, having gained their point, had grown sleepy, and retired to their well-deserved repose. In the meantime the Ministry was not idle. Every post of vantage was entrusted to the military, and this time preparations were made to ensure the Queen's expulsion, the conduct of which was committed to the head of the police in the Save-Mala quarter of the town, Monsieur Raskovitch, a man of firmness and courage. He was confident of success. "I will conduct the Queen over the frontier," he said, "if she is only in her night-dress."

At midnight the police, under Monsieur Raskovitch, crawled over the roofs of the houses in Prince Michael Street until they came to the Queen's, and then Raskovitch told Lieutenant Kassili to take three men and descend into the Queen's courtyard and there guard the entrance. Kassili, however, declined to climb down, on the ground that it was said that three hundred men were shut up in the Queen's house and were determined to offer a bloody resistance. Raskovitch took a loaded revolver in his hand and descended first into the Queen's courtyard. The others followed. They had hardly touched the ground when a voice challenged them: "Halt! Who's there?" "In the name of the King!" cried Raskovitch, and held up his lantern to look for the three hundred men, but they were not there. Three men and a boy were the Queen's defenders, the others having gone home some time before.

The ex-Queen was given till six o'clock in the morning before her slumber was broken; she was then awakened and taken in a cab to the railway station under a strong military escort. She wept and bemoaned herself, and (one can hardly be surprised to hear it) "forgot herself so far as to say injurious things to the officer in command of the railway station, whom she reminded of the defeat of Slivnitza." This, of course, is considered a very unworthy attack, the officer being in no way re-

sponsible for what was principally due to King Milan's bad generalship; but an excited woman is not always logical, and Natalie had borne more than her share of fortune's buffets during the last twenty-four hours. It was no wonder she turned upon the unoffending officer.

When the inhabitants of Belgrade awoke next morning the streets were cleared of the military and wore their usual peaceful appearance. The ex-Queen was already at Semlin and in Hungarian territory.

Semlin, which is a small town on the borders of Austria, is situated about seven or eight miles from Belgrade. It has a somewhat similar duty to perform as in its day had Calais, where refugees were wont to spend the weary hours of banishment. A great many of the grandees of Servia had gone through this dreary experience at Semlin; Queen Natalie also had to pay the penalty of playing with edged tools by wearing out her heart in this dull town. As a simple citizen, without state or ceremonial, she had taken what accommodation was to be found at the Hotel Europa. She had come from Belgrade in a special train, and no one knew as yet that the Queen-mother had been expelled from her son's dominions. Later on the news came to hand, but excited little or no comment.

The Austro-Hungarian Government, true to their friendship towards the House of Obrenovitch, ordered

a guard of honour to patrol before the house which sheltered the ex-Queen; but as there arose some danger lest her friends and dependants, who were arriving by every train from Belgrade and massing together, might make some demonstration, the guard before the hotel was strengthened, and the order was given to fix bayonets. The soldiers in barracks were kept ready for action. The report was current through the town that a party was on the way to rescue the Queen and bring her back in triumph to Belgrade.

Meantime the head of the police in Semlin, Herr Chavrak, had received a circular from Vienna, Budapest, and Agram, desiring him to communicate in the most courteous manner to the Queen of Servia the desire of the Austro-Hungarian authorities that she would quit Semlin on the next morning, May 20th, thereby putting an end to the agitation which was becoming general in the town. The Queen, who in moments of danger showed to great advantage, answered with calmness and dignity that she had no desire to cause disturbance, and that she had arranged to leave Semlin the following morning by the steamboat and proceed to Roumania. The agents of the Austrian Steamboat Company immediately set to work to get all in readiness for the reception of the Queen, and on May 20th, at ten o'clock in the morning, Natalie set sail.

Her drive from the hotel to the boat had been characterised by scenes similar (although not so stormy) as those which had occurred in Belgrade, only with a difference: the mob, who with shouting and great show of zeal had broken through the cordon drawn by the police, consisted in a large degree of personal friends and dependants who had come to Semlin to show their friendship by making a demonstration on her behalf. A certain number of the burghers of Semlin had joined the procession, and had been carried away by the excitement of the moment, and made their throats sore by their "Zivela Rufe!" but beyond this momentary display of enthusiasm their support was of no value whatever. A Servian mob has many good qualities; it is guilty of few excesses, and is never carried away by the excitement of the moment to commit acts of violence. And moreover, there is seldom peril from popular violence in the East. There the danger lies in the spirit of revenge which shows itself in midnight assassinations. In the dark alleys of a big city, or by the river-side, when the shadow of the night falls with such romantic charm on the blue waters of the Danube, the murderer comes creeping along with stealthy steps behind the victim: a thrust of the dagger, a stifled cry, and all is over. This method of paying out your enemy strikes an Eastern as more honourable and less expensive than the European method of

settling by legal proceedings, which take time and money. For the rest, Servians are naturally gentle and soft-spoken, and quarrels which lead to murder are rare.

On May 11th, 1891, a formal decree of banishment from the kingdom of Servia was pronounced against Queen Natalie, who was on no pretext whatever to enter the kingdom without the permission of the Regents. On September 14th of the same year King Milan placed in the hands of the Regents a formal renouncement of all the dignities which had been his. He renounced all connection with the House of Obrenovitch and all claim to the Servian throne.

CHAPTER IX

ON August 16th, 1895, King Alexander attained his nineteenth year. He had in those days very much the air of a young student; there was a total absence of that stiff, military mien to which one is accustomed in foreign princes. He resembled his mother more than his father. From the time of his father's abdication he had been placed under the care of Dr. Lazar Dokitch, who superintended his education. No better choice could have been made. Dokitch was devoted to his charge, who, in return, gave to Dokitch the warmest affection. He loved Dokitch as his best friend; it might be said that he had the first place in the young King's heart.

King Alexander was well educated. He had a special talent for languages; he spoke German, French, and Russian fluently. In the latter language he had a special teacher, so much importance did Milan attach to his son's possessing a thorough knowledge of Russian.

One who knew the young King well describes him in the following words :—

"Natalie's Sacha, whom I often meet at Vienna or Wiesbaden, is a quiet, prematurely grave young man, who has developed both bodily and mentally in a very sudden manner. No one would believe that the King of Servia is only nineteen. His manners are amiable; he meets you half-way. The smile on his lips is somewhat flickering, and might be called feeble. He has a friendly shake of the hand for those he knows, but what he really thinks lies buried deep down in his heart, and no one of his *entourage* has been allowed access to this secret chamber, unless, perhaps, Dokitch, for whom the King has a real affection."

When the King was fifteen years old the Regents had proposed that he should visit Vienna and St. Petersburg. Great preparations were made, and endless *pourparlers* took place between the Cabinets of Belgrade and St. Petersburg, and between Belgrade and Vienna. At last the date of the journey was fixed. The young King travelled with a suite of eighteen persons—a truly stately cortège for the monarch of Servia. Amongst the suite the foremost and most important personage was Dr. Jovan Ristisch. The Russian Ambassador, Persiani, and his suite also accompanied the young King a certain part of the way on the journey to Russia. On the frontier of that country the King was received by the Czar's envoys, Generals Arapoff and Paschkoff. When accounts of the

"pompous" nature of the King's reception was received in Servia, general satisfaction was felt. The Czar, Alexander III., conceived quite a fatherly affection for the young King, who, at the same time, had a certain claim on his good offices, being his godson. The ladies were enthusiastic over the boyish Sovereign, and some funny gossip was set going. One Princess, it was said, was so carried away by her admiration for the royal visitor that she embraced him at the Emperor's table; but then, she was shielded by years, being quite old enough to be Sacha's grandmother.

The King's stay in Russia lasted a month, after which he visited his father's friend, Francis Joseph, and received a most hearty welcome. His tour wound up with a private visit to Paris.

For his summer excursion the King had arranged a longer journey, which was to include, first, Germany, and afterwards Constantinople; but the death of General Protitsch, which was quite unexpected, put an end to these plans. Protitsch's death opened the door to many possibilities, and it was not the moment for the King to leave Belgrade. He did, however, travel as far as Gues, where he was met by his father, with whom he arranged a somewhat unexpected surprise for his subjects. By a curious coincidence the Russian and Austrian ambassadors appeared one morning, all anxiety to try the virtue

of the Gues spa. Such a meeting, however, was not without consequences.

The political horizon was clouded, and although the Radical Government was turned out and its successors were Liberals who did their best, yet the country was seething with agitation, which it seemed impossible to set at rest. Dokitch, the King's principal adviser, opened his eyes to the real position in which he stood, and to the dangers which threatened the House of Obrenovitch. Dokitch adjured the King to break down all the barriers (?) that divided him from his people. He conjured him to take the reins of government into his own hands and judge of what was to be done, not through other people's eyes, but with his own.

The imagination of the young is easily fired with enthusiasm. The King's eyes glowed with ardour and his pale face flushed with excitement. Yes, he would not be a *roi fainéant;* he would be a ruler of men. Everything was set in train. The King's French tutor, Mallet, was despatched with a letter from the King to his father. Milan, in reply, accepted the office of intermediary between the King and the Radical leaders, and in a letter to Pastisch acquainted him with the King's plans. Pastisch was therefore commissioned (in case the plot against the Regents succeeded) to be the champion of the new departure. A few days only, before the *coup d'état*,

two officers, Colonels Milanovitch and Franassovitch, were also taken into the King's confidence and given charge to watch over his person and not to leave him in the lurch.

Alexander, who at this time of his life was full of youthful zeal, anxious to improve his country and to execute beneficial reforms, found himself hampered by the ignorant obstructions of the Radical party; and they no sooner saw that the King—young as he was—had a serious purpose, than they began their usual work of obstruction. The King's advisers, however, especially Dokitch, who had the real interest of his former pupil at heart, piloted him through this crisis, which ended in the dismissal of the Radical ministry. It was succeeded by a Liberal Cabinet.

"The return of the Liberals," writes a well-informed writer, "would have been a blessing, if the Liberals had not committed the same fault which had led to the fall of their predecessors, the Radicals. The annihiliation of your adversary may be allowable from a military point of view, but war to the knife is hardly a wise policy in public life. The Liberal party, however, started on these lines, and this in the end landed Servia in what approached closely to civil war. The worst mistake, however, was the bad counsel given to the King in attempting to persuade him to identify himself with the programme of the Liberal Government. Dr. Dokitch

opened his former pupil's eyes to the use to which he was about to be put, and which would have endangered not alone his interests, but those of Servia. Dokitch was the best adviser the young monarch could have had. It was Dokitch who put into the King's mind the idea of the *coup d'état* which took place in Belgrade, and which took not only Servia, but Europe, by surprise. It was well organised, thanks to Dokitch, who impressed upon his pupil that the secret should be carefully guarded ; only Milan was let into the plot, and Mallet, the King's French teacher, was despatched to Paris to summon the King to his son's side. Milan undertook to manage the Radical section, and to disclose the King's plan in a letter to Pastisch. On the day of the *coup d'état* Pastisch was likewise to proclaim openly his adherence to the new Government.

Pastisch seems to have respected the secrecy of this confidence, and shortly before the event took place the King admitted to the same confidence Colonels Milanovitch and Franassovitch, for whose secrecy both Dokitch and Pastisch had gone bail. Queen Natalie was also informed of the *coup d'état* which was in prospect.

The reader will be astonished to hear who was the messenger chosen to bring to the exiled Queen the news of the coming event. It was Milan himself, and this gives a dramatic touch to the incident.

The Queen was at this period (1893) living quietly at Biarritz. It would seem that the chapter of her life that had to do with Milan was closed for ever. The old proverb, however, tells us that nothing is more certain than the unexpected. This seems a paradox, but it came true in this life-story, for in 1893 Natalie is suddenly told that the King, her husband, is in Biarritz—nay, that he is at her door and begs for an interview. Taken by surprise, the Queen received him, but when she saw him standing before her, an aged, broken man, her composure gave way ; she could not speak ; she trembled like a leaf. She listened, however, to what he had to say, although his emotion was so great that at first his words were inaudible. By degrees, however, both husband and wife regained composure. He had come, he told her, to acquaint her, by his son's desire, of the *coup d'état* which was to take place on the first of April, 1894, by which the Regents and ministers were to be put aside, and the King, in spite of his being still a minor, was to take upon himself the government of the kingdom. Natalie heartily approved of the scheme, and after two days' residence in Biarritz the King returned to Paris. The only condition Natalie made in giving her approval was that soon after the *coup d'état* she was to see her son, and that in order to remove the impression which had been left by her cruel expulsion

from Servia, her reception at Belgrade should be public.

The young King, having done his duty in apprising his parents of his intentions, now began his preparations for what may be called the great act in his political life. The night fixed was April 1st. The persons engaged in this conspiracy (if you can so call an attempt to shake off oppressive authority) were few in number, those in Belgrade being Dokitch, Pastisch, with Colonels Milanovitch and Franassovitch. The King made both officers swear solemnly that on this night they would obey his orders implicitly and listen to no one else, and he also begged them to send secretly a detachment of the pupils of the Military School who might be of service. During the minority of the King neither the army, nor the soldiers who guarded the Castle, nor any official in Belgrade, were bound to obey his orders.

On the previous day, March 31st, the King had sent to the Regents and ministers a request that they would come at eight o'clock in the evening to discuss some important matters. This was a very unusual proceeding, and Ristisch at once refused, at the same time suggesting that if the King had anything to communicate he could do so in the regular way through the Regents, who, if they thought fit, would then notify the communication to the ministers.

The King replied that it was a private matter he wished to discuss, and on hearing this the Regents and the ministers agreed to come, having a little curiosity to know what the matter was. Perhaps it was a love affair, or perhaps it was debts. Time would tell.

The evening, we are told, was cold and stormy. Spring, as we have lately had cause to remember, is very uncertain in her freaks, and in the streets of Belgrade, says a recent writer, "an icy north wind whistled through the branches of the chestnut trees which shelter the entrance to the Castle.

"As the carriages of the two Regents and the minister drove into the courtyard the gates were promptly shut. The new hall of the Castle, which is used only for great occasions, was blazing with light, and the guests were received by the King. Each one of the guests felt uneasy; they could not say why, unless the feeling was caused by this new departure of the King's. But it was a boyish freak, they thought, and thus tried to dismiss it from their minds. Ristisch, however, who could never think of the King but as a child, began to take him to task. The young King answered good-humouredly and passed it off as a joke. While the King and his party, from which Major Cirie and Dr. Dokitch were missing, went to dinner, invitations were sent to several people, leaders of the Radical party and friends

of the King, who were all surprised at the late hour at which they received these mandates, but who nevertheless got ready, although grumbling at having to go out so late.

"They were received by Colonel Milanovitch, and were introduced through a line of bodyguards into the throne-room, which was next the dining-hall, where the King and his ministers were still at dinner.

"In the meantime Major Cirie had ordered the courtyard to be surrounded by a detachment of bodyguards; the corps of military students also, after they had taken an oath to be silent as to whatever they saw and heard and only to obey the commands of the King, were introduced quietly into the Castle, where they were received by Colonel Milanovitch, and mounted guard with fixed bayonets in the throne-room. At the same time every exit from the Castle was carefully guarded. Dr. Dokitch and Colonel Franassovitch conversed with the leaders of the extreme wing of the Radical party, explaining carefully to these men the reason why the *coup d'état* which was to be put into execution was so absolutely necessary. An impromptu Cabinet was arranged, and when this was settled Major Cirie went to the King's table and whispered in his ear, 'Your Majesty, all is ready!'

"The King rose from the table, and in a strong, clear voice, which showed no sign of nervousness,

said: 'The situation in which Servia finds herself at this moment makes it my absolute duty to take the reins of government into my own hands. I thank you, gentlemen, who have filled the posts of Regents and ministers, for your services to me, and I beg you will sign your acts of abdication. From this moment there shall be no will in Servia but *mine*, and my commands must be obeyed. Gentlemen, for this night you remain my prisoners.'

"This bold and autocratic speech stunned the Regents; they remained silent and motionless until the King rose to quit the table; then General Beli-Markovitch (Regent) sprang to his feet, gesticulating wildly, as he shrieked: 'Who dares to speak or command here? I shall not resign! I represent the Crown!'

"The King laughed, while he motioned to the folding-doors, which now opened and disclosed the soldiers, with their glittering bayonets. General Beli-Markovitch, who was a brave man, was not intimidated; he seized his dagger and smiled significantly. Major Cirie threw himself before the young King, while he pointed a revolver at the General.

"'Are you mad?' cried the stout-hearted General. 'Don't you know I can have you shot to-morrow? and, by ——, you shall be shot!' Then he turned to the pupils of the Military School, who were lining the adjoining room. 'By whose orders are you here?'

he asked. 'You have forgotten your duty towards the Minister of War, and towards the Regents, and to-morrow morning I shall make an example of you; you shall be tried by court-martial and shot!'

"While the General was blustering in this fashion, Ristisch, pale and nervous, lay back in his chair. He kept repeating: 'His Majesty is trying a dangerous experiment! Poor child!' The minister meantime gazed about him with angry, excited looks, which fastened now and again on the King with terrible scrutiny.

"The King now turned to leave the room. Suddenly he retraced his steps, and going up to his uncle, General Coulott Bogecivitch, the War Minister, said hurriedly, 'Forgive me, I had forgotten; thou canst come and go as it pleaseth thee.'

"'I thank your Majesty,' replied the General, 'but I stand or fall with my colleagues. I remain your Majesty's prisoner.'"

This curious scene shows the young King in quite a new light. It undoubtedly required considerable firmness to carry through so bold a measure, which electrified all who were acquainted with the position of affairs in Servia. It was likewise attended with no small risk, and failure would have meant the murder of the King. On the other hand, no one could deny that it was his right to assert himself, and so far he had borne himself bravely through

this difficult moment in his young life. Nor was his night's work over when he quitted the angry Regents. Accompanied by Colonel Franassovitch, the new War Minister, and Major Cirie, he visited the different posts where danger might arise in case of an attack on the Castle, and he saw that the bodyguards were placed at any weak spot. He sent messengers to the foreign Embassies announcing that he had taken the government into his own hands ; then he went to the barracks, where soldiers and officers gave him a hearty welcome, the troops taking the oath of allegiance to him.

In the meantime the crestfallen Regents had, by the King's orders, been conducted to sleeping apartments in the new building which rose side by side with the old Castle, while the proclamation of the King, addressed to "my people," was hurriedly printed off, and given out into many eager hands. To the soldiers and the police was given the task of posting these proclamations on every available wall or hoarding.

In the early dawn the inhabitants, who had gone to sleep all unconscious of the great change that had occurred in the night-time, were awakened by the beating of drums and the shrill note of the trumpets. This was followed by the announcement that the Regents had been dismissed, that the Ministers had been superseded, and that the Government was now

vested in the person of their young King, who had the assistance of the new Radical progressive coalition minister, Dr. Dokitch, to guide him.

The *coup d'état* was received in Servia with acclamation. Everywhere there were illuminations, public games, and universal rejoicing. In Belgrade, as well as in other towns, this rejoicing was principally manifested by an abnormal consumption of drinks of all kinds, with the result that to be sober was the exception. For fifteen days everyone was holiday-making, and the only gloomy faces were those of the Regents, certain householders, and tradespeople, who would probably suffer considerable diminution of income. Great bonfires lit up the darkness of night, and in the interior of the country the woods were set ablaze.

A new era was ushered in : freedom, justice, and peace were the watchwords which were proclaimed from the housetops. It was declared in proclamations and in speeches by popular orators that this would be the law in Servia for ever and a day.

Alas ! poor Servia was soon to be disillusioned in this respect. The failure was not the fault of the King nor of his adviser Dokitch, both of whom were perfectly honest in the programme they gave to the nation ; but an unfortunate fate interfered. Dokitch's health broke down quickly, mysteriously : in five months after the *coup d'état* he was pronounced incurable, and he was sent by order of his physician

to the shores of the Adriatic to seek some alleviation of his sufferings.

His absence was fatal. Dokitch was strong enough to enforce on the King the necessity of keeping the promise he had made to resist the pressure of the Radical party, but so soon as he left Belgrade the Radicals began to raise their heads. Before Christmas came Dokitch had succumbed to his malady, and a purely Radical Cabinet, with General Gruitch as Minister, came into office.

A certain professor named Besnie, who wanted to push to the front, had by force of character got himself made Minister of Education, and this gave him the opportunity he desired. He advocated the doctrines held by his friends, and especially by himself, against royalty in general and against the person of the King in particular. Besnie, who was an audacious Radical, made it the business of his life to lower the King's prestige: he tried on every occasion to master Alexander. If the King had persons to dine with him who were of different politics from the Radicals, or allowed such to come to the Court, the Minister immediately brought the King to book. This was insupportable. In the assembly very violent scenes took place, in which Besnie forgot himself so far as to speak to the King in a loud, hectoring voice and in a very dictatorial manner, using most offensive words. The King said

nothing, but presently got up and left the room. From this time he never addressed Besnie.[1]

It is somewhat tedious to follow all the different alterations which took place in the Administration after Dokitch's death, the ministerial changes being so rapid as to remind one of the child's toy called Jack-in-the-box.

At last, in despair and weariness, the young King turned to his father and implored him to come to his assistance in the task of reconstructing either a Liberal or a Coalition Cabinet—anything, in fact, rather than another Radical Administration.

Milan, who was always in want of money, and who found a visit to Servia profitable, accepted his son's invitation gladly.[2]

[1] The Besnie episode made a strong impression on the young King, who had been accustomed to receive from Dokitch the most respectful attention. He had a horror of freedom, being of the opinion that too much familiarity breeds contempt. He had a delicate organisation, and the roughness of a strong man irritated his nervous, rather highly strung nature, as did any coarseness or vulgarity. Dokitch understood these points in his character, and carefully avoided jarring against them.

[2] On this visit to Belgrade Milan was much altered; the humiliations he had experienced, the disappointments he had undergone, had told upon him. His grand air, that royal nonchalance which sat so well upon him in the days of his prosperity, had given place to the depressed, almost shrinking manner of a man who expects a rebuff, and, King as he was, he had received many such. His impecuniosity had come to a point. Often three francs was all he had in his purse. It has always been said by his friends—and no man had better and more generous friends—that Milan's impecuniosity was not so much his fault (although little can be said in his defence) but the fault of circumstances.

To a student of human nature, with its many twistings and turnings, it must have been an interesting study to watch the excitement of the crowd which assembled in hundreds to give Milan a welcome. The nervous excitement which attends all popular demonstrations is contagious, passing from individual to individual and acting on each according to the weakness or strength of their bodily and mental power. The largest crowd was gathered in front of the Castle, while every hotel and coffee-house was filled to overflowing.

That evening the King met in conclave the leading members of the different political sections. Ex-King Milan was likewise present, as was also Garaschanin, who now held the important position of leader of the party of progress. Milan and Garaschanin had not met since the Markovitch-Knitschanin affair, but this was a kiss-and-be-friends meeting, and all grudges were to be put away.

When Garaschanin entered the King's room he was pale and disturbed. Not so Milan. He came forward with an outstretched hand, saying, "In the service of our Fatherland let everything be forgotten."

When this was known in Belgrade General Gruitch sent in his resignation as minister, which the King, with a nod of the head, accepted. This was the *coup de grâce* to the Radicals.

On January 23rd, 1896, the new Cabinet was announced. Its leader was Simie, formerly Ambassador to the Court of Vienna. His first mission was to carry a friendly message of peace and reconciliation from Milan to his former friend and guardian Ristisch. The old and now broken statesman refused. "During my life," he said, "King Milan has many a time offered me his hand in reconciliation, and has soon drawn it back in order to inflict an injury on me. I am old; I want nothing more, and seek for no promotion. I have only one wish left—to end my days in peace."

Ristisch decided wisely. At the opening of the Skupshtina, January 24th, 1896, the uttermost confusion prevailed; such a spectacle has hardly ever been presented by any assembly, the ministers not being allowed to speak, the shrieks, the cries, and the noise being indescribable. The President left and repaired to the King to announce what had happened. The King, who was much disturbed by the news, said, "I did not expect this. I stepped into the breach to save worse consequences, and I have fared no better. My God! how will it all end!" Poor Sacha! he was too young for troubles of this kind.

In the end, after more scandalous scenes, the Ministry retired. A new Cabinet was formed which did not commend itself to the Radical section, who

now lost all command of their rank and file. As the King or his father passed in or out of the Castle the mob would shriek in their ears, "Wait till the snow on our mountains melts, then woe to you!"

In consequence of this incessant turmoil and agitation political murders were the order of the day. No man of any weight in the political circle was safe; he carried his life in his hands. And now the harassed Government received notice of a secret conspiracy against the King. Some names were given, and the leader was said to be one Cebenitz. This man, being watched by secret agents, was arrested on May 17th, as he was getting into the train for Vienna. In his pockets, it was said, were found numerous letters of a most damaging character addressed to the Radical leaders, to Ranko Tassie and Prince Peter Karageorgovitch, as well as a large sum of money in gold and "a *note-book*." Cebenitz at first refused to give any information, but presently came to a wiser conclusion, and revealed the whole plot, which, he said, originated with him, his desire being to free Servia from the rule of the Obrenovitch. To do this he had travelled all over Servia to enlist accomplices, and he had found what he sought. It was a widespread conspiracy. The conspirators had laid their plans with evident knowledge of the situation. The King was fond of boating on the Save, and the plan was to watch the opportunity of seizing

the boat and conveying the King in it to Austria. Prince Peter Karageorgovitch was to be immediately proclaimed King. Furthermore, it was discovered that agents were employed in all directions to buy arms and ammunition. On the strength of the revelations of Cebenitz and the secrets of the note-book, innumerable arrests were made, and countless houses in Belgrade were searched by the police. It was a veritable reign of terror. It was a fact that at a short distance from Belgrade a secret manufactory of ammunition was being carried on, and in the house of the suspect Ranko Tassie 40,000 muskets were found.

Every day the excitement increased, and the gravity of the situation became more and more intensified. At this moment the King, on the night of May 21st, withdrew the Constitution given by Milan to the nation in 1888, and in its place restored that of 1869. When Belgrade awoke next morning the announcement of this new *coup d'état* greeted the astonished citizens at every corner of the streets :—

"Servians,—In former years I asked of you to give me your faithful service, and in return I promised to govern the country as the Constitution demanded. You received this announcement with enthusiasm, with love, and with confidence. For this I thank you. I have been brought up in the traditions of the House of Obrenovitch, and I believe

in your patriotism, as you believe in my firm resolve to guard the sacred interests of the nation and its Constitutional rights.

"It is the sacred duty of every citizen to give me active assistance in fulfilling the duties I have sworn to perform, and this duty should be doubly sacred to servants of the Crown and the public bodies.

"My task has been doubly difficult, for during my long minority laws were passed which were not in touch with the Constitution; laws that were opposed to the interests of the throne and of the Fatherland, and were, likewise, framed for party purposes and the interests of individuals. My best intentions have been frustrated by unsurmountable obstacles.

"This situation induces me to call on you for assistance, and on my side I engage that when peace and order have been restored to our troubled country, I shall present you with a new Constitution. I have this day resolved to rescind the Constitution of 1888, with all its conditions, and to restore temporarily the Constitution of 1869, which comes into force this day, and which I command all officials to carry into effect.

Belgrade, on St. Nicholas Day, 1896.

"ALEXANDER."

It was observed that this manifesto bore the King's signature only. Twenty-seven years previously it had been compiled by Ristisch and by him given to the people, but he often acknowledged it was too narrow, even for twenty-seven years ago. His signature was absent, the King refusing to allow him to have any responsibility in the matter, which was altogether his own inception.

The revival of a Constitution given twenty-seven years previously was a grave mistake, and the effect it produced was startling. An unnatural quiet prevailed. "There was stillness everywhere. Especially in Belgrade was the silence oppressive. If anyone spoke to their neighbour, it was in a whisper." The search for papers and the arrests of suspects in the Cebenitz business continued; arrests were made every day. Professor Novokovitch and the publisher of the Radical paper, *The Odjek*, with many others, fled to Austria, and even Nicolas Pastisch, minister, president, and leader of the Radical Press, had to seek safety in flight.

CHAPTER X

AT this point it may not be out of place to give a short *résumé* of Servian politics. In 1889 the nation had still preserved all the traditions of the former greatness of their country. They clung to the grand Propaganda, which was the war-cry of every popular leader. When, therefore, in consequence of Milan's abdication the Radicals became the powerful party, the question arose, how were they to deal with the Propaganda without coming into conflict with the different sections of the Parliament? Some of the members who were in the front rank of progressives were for throwing over the old-fashioned Propaganda and for giving attention to such crying necessities as the housing of the people, educating the classes, and getting rid of the surplus population. The consequence of this mild revolt was the election of Sava Gruitch as minister. He came into office as a sort of stop-gap. He was moderate in politics and acceptable to the generality of the people. Sava Gruitch, however, had not reckoned with the repeal of Milan's drastic banishment of the

heads and firebrands of the Radical section. This was Milan's last bid for popularity, and it shared the fate which follows these ill-considered attempts at gaining the people's affections.

With the abdication of Milan the Radical party had become the leading party in Servia. They practically governed the country. They made much of what they called their "Propaganda," which was a sort of inflated gush over the great Servian kingdom, by which is meant the kingdom over which Emperor Dushan had held sway, and which extended to the Bosphorus. The House of Obrenovitch had nothing to say to Emperor Dushan, and it would have been a wiser programme to have thrown over the idea of restoring Dushan's empire and to have made the most of the actual kingdom, which could have been done by drawing closer the relations between Servia and Montenegro. Sava Gruitch was the minister re-elected after Milan's abdication. He held moderate views, and his principal aims were to reconcile the Radicals with Austria, to preserve the dynasty of Obrenovitch, and to give Servia a just government, based on solid foundations. This was all very well. Gruitch had the best intentions, and wished that Servia should have a new start and a fair chance. Soon, however, he found himself a target for the Radicals, who were led by Nicholas Pasie, or Pastisch. Pastisch had been a political prisoner, and although

Milan had pardoned him, the returned prodigal (in a Radical sense) was not the least grateful.

The political agitation was running high. The illness of General Protitsch had opened up possibilities which the Radical Government were eager to seize. In the intoxication of their sudden rise to power they saw no reason why they should not stretch out their lawless hands and get still more. The *Glawni Odbor*, the mouthpiece of the party, indicated the wishes of the country, *i.e.* that the Radical leader Pastisch should fill Protitsch's place as Regent. The plan of the Radicals was well conceived. Pastisch was to be chosen Regent by the Radical Skupshtina; the other Regents, who had been appointed by Milan, would be forced by Pastisch to retire, who would then declare that Milan's mandate (by which they held their appointment) was by his abdication made null and void. The Radicals had all the authority of the Government on their side; the army was secure; and in the Skupshtina, with the exception of Garaschanin, whose followers were a mere handful, they had an overwhelming majority. What was, then, to hinder them carrying all before them? Ristisch, however, did not get the name of a "sly fox" for nothing. He was the only man who could stop the course of the Radicals, and he did. He courageously refused to summon the Skupshtina for the purpose of naming a Regent. It was in vain that the Radicals

roared and the *Glawni Odbor* threatened. Ristisch stood firm ; and then amid a scene of clamour and fury Pastisch gave in his resignation and that of his colleagues. Neither the leader nor his followers believed for a moment that their resignation would be accepted, nor that there would be found any possibility of forming a Cabinet. Ristisch, however, made the experiment, and succeeded. This courage on the part of Ristisch saved the situation.

This, although a check to the Radicals, did not lessen their ascendency, and they continued to talk big about the great Servian programme, but they did not do much more than talk. Their principal idea was what is vulgarly called to feather their own nests. There was some danger of war breaking out in the Balkan, and Servia was to put herself in readiness if called upon. Money was voted in the Skupshtina, and Pastisch and his friends had the management of ten million francs. Out of this money the War Department did not receive a franc ; it was spent for party purposes.

Such pilfering was not what one would have expected from high-minded patriots, and one is not surprised to hear that the star of Pastisch was already beginning to wane, and that it was soon altogether extinguished.

The changes in the political world of Servia remind one of the differences in the French Chamber,

and to the reader of contemporary history the rotations from the Cabinet Gruitch to the Cabinet Pastisch, and finally to the Cabinet Avakumovitch, are not specially interesting, although they are very confusing. There is, of course, always interest for the student, and even for the general reader, for there is a touch of comedy in some of the political doings.

In 1891 General Kosta Protitsch died ; he was one of the three Regents. In him Milan lost a faithful friend on whom he could rely. Protitsch had always been a thorn in the side of the Radicals, who immediately cast their eyes on his vacant office. It had been one of the provisions of Milan's Act of Abdication that politics should have nothing to do with the choice of the Regents, which was fair, as they represented the monarchy. Ristisch, it was said, took more upon himself than did Kosta Protitsch or Beli-Markovitch, and that since the year of Milan's abdication he had somewhat lost his equilibrium. He was, in truth, the ruler of Servia. He imagined he could do all things, and for a man of his experience (he had been nearly his whole life about the Court) he was singularly destitute of tact.

General Protitsch's death brought Milan to Belgrade. He had not visited the Servian capital for two years, and the people looked curiously at "the old King," for so they called the once handsome Milan.

When Milan abdicated in favour of his son he

did him the worst service he could have rendered his child, who from that moment parted with the greatest treasure life can hold—a happy childhood. Those blessed with memories of their mother's fond embraces, of their father's kind and tender words, who have never known what it is to meet cold looks and stern rebukes, but who have basked in the sunshine of affectionate surroundings, have a treasure which no one can take from them. The boy-King had no doubt much that gives the childish heart pleasure. He had ponies to ride, carriages to drive in ; he was flattered and made much of with one hand, kept down with the other ; but in both cases he detected, as children always do, that no one really loved him. His attendants flattered him, the ladies petted him, the ministers, especially Ristisch, kept him under. Nobody understood him.

I do not think history furnishes a sadder chapter than that which deals with the childhood and youth of some royal children, who, from no faults of theirs, have suffered—some of them—tragic deaths, like the dauphin son to Louis XVI. or the Princes in the Tower, while others have had, perhaps, a worse misery—the daily, hourly suppression of every childish wish, the torture inflicted by strict etiquette, and the loneliness of their young hearts starving for affection and getting none.

Sacha had an unhappy childhood. He felt the

separation from Natalie keenly, and the differences between his parents, who were equally attached to him, placed the child in a difficult position. From his babyhood he had, as it were, to steer his course between his parents, who would turn on him occasionally and frighten him by their violence. Then came the moment when he was left in the hands of men and women who were the enemies of his parents. The only friend he could look to at this time was Ristisch, and yet we cannot fancy a child attaching itself to Ristisch.

There is no doubt that in his childhood and early youth Alexander preferred his father, who was fond of the boy after his fashion, and at the same time did not torment him with reproaches and outbursts of jealousy as did his mother.

Not long since the writer heard from a resident in Belgrade, who was much in Milan's company, that when first the boy-Prince came back to Servia he was made much of by his father, who gave him boy-companions as well as all the pleasures of boyhood. One day Milan told the Prince that he was the King, and went down on his knees to do him homage. After this all the Prince's playthings were taken away, and he was taught to act as a grown-up person. The poor Prince cried half the day. After all, he was still a child, and the life of a king did not appeal to his childish imagination.

Natalie, who from the beginning had watched the growth of all that was evil in her son's nature, had the courage to speak openly against the training he was receiving at the hands of his would-be guardians, which, she said, was on the same lines as that received by Milan in his early youth, and which, she said, would practically have the same result.

The Queen's account was fairly correct. The Radicals were undoubtedly using the young King for their own purposes. They dragged him from village to village, and in each place he had to make a profession of his faith in the Radical gospel. These men went so far as to force the young King to place a wreath on the tomb of Kara George, which was situated in Topola. He was told that the old enmity between the Karageorgovitch and the Obrenovitch was at an end, and at the same time the reconciliation was publicly announced to the nation. A few days later Peter Karageorgovitch, the last remaining claimant to the Servian throne, published a counter declaration stigmatising the so-called renunciation as having no grain of truth, and adding that so long as a Karageorgovitch lived he would claim his right to be ruler of Servia.

The years went by, and the Prince was nineteen. Milan, who occasionally visited Belgrade for the purpose of raising a loan, etc., writes to an in-

timate friend his opinion of his son. It is not very favourable, but we must always take Milan with reservation.

"BELGRADE, 1895.

"Sacha is hardly recognisable. He is full of cunning and very masterful, so that I fear he will cause me considerable pain and do Servia much harm. The Radicals have taken possession of him and are turning him against me, although it was my doing that they were reconciled to the Government. On that occasion an agreement was made that in consequence of my assistance the fight between me and the Radical party (either secretly or publicly) should cease. The cursed *Glawni Odbor*, the great gun of the party, refuses, now that they are again in the saddle, to keep to the agreement. They hate me, and sometimes I am afraid that Sacha will leave me in the lurch."

In his letter Milan gives a curious account of the manners of the ministers towards the King.

"Some of them strike the table with their clenched fists in order to force their King to agree to their proposals. You will hardly believe that Sacha has to run out of the room to escape their violence. Nevertheless, this is actually the case."

In the same letter, in addition to giving rather a poor account of Sacha's health, he talks of finding him a wife, in whose noble heart he will find the solace of a true friend.

"My thoughts turn to either an Austrian Archduchess or a German Princess. One of these would understand how to win Sacha's affection, and she would teach him to act as a Prince should, and under such direction he might gradually rid himself of the poison which has been infused into his mind. Day and night my thoughts are full of this subject. I should value your opinion.

"MILAN."

After the excitement consequent upon the *coup d'état* had subsided and the people were beginning to accustom themselves to the new order of things, the Court became more lively. It was only natural it should be so. There was youth in the barque, then why should not pleasure be in the prow? The King invited his mother at certain intervals to do the honours for him, and during these visits amusement was the order of the day. Balls and soirées were given at the palace, to which not alone the high functionaries of Servia and the foreign diplomats, but, likewise, the rank and fashion of Belgrade, were invited. All State ceremonials are conducted in Servia with great simplicity; royalty is easy of

access, and a stranger with ordinary introductions, or even without such, will be given an audience and invited to the palace. A recent writer in the *Pall Mall Magazine* describes very pleasantly the absence of form at the royal Court of Servia :—

"You leave your carriage, and, on your entrance, are received by a Court official. If you can speak German to this high official, you will be a *persona grata*, for, in accordance with the practice in most European Courts, the Teuton is omnipresent. The Court official conducts the visitor up a flight of stairs, which, although handsomely carpeted, conveys the impression of a staircase in a well-kept hotel. On the first landing is the Adjutant's room (the Adjutant on this occasion being Major Cirie, of the *coup d'état* memory). This functionary leads the visitor to the reception room, where footmen bring you black coffee and sweetmeats, after which you are conducted to the King's study."

In the year 1894–5 the Queen-mother was on a visit to her son in Belgrade. The trials of her life had told upon the once lovely Queen, and, perhaps also, the course of years, for now the bloom of youth had vanished. Her large, dark eyes still preserved their wondrous beauty, but round the once smiling rosebud mouth hard lines were cut into the fair, soft skin, and the delicate throat, that first betrayer of the

advance of time, had to be enfolded in many swathings of some soft material. In spite, however, of the advance of years, Queen Natalie, ten years ago, was still a lovely woman. Her son, King Alexander, relied much on his mother's advice, having every confidence in her good sense and judgment. During her visits she generally held a reception. A reception, like the King's Court, was a very simple affair, more after the style of an ordinary visit. The Queen motioned to her visitor to be seated. Cigarettes were then offered, the Queen also smoking while she conversed with her visitor. Natalie was always a great conversationalist, and it was not easy to get in a word edgeways, as the saying goes, or even to reply to her numerous questions. Her voice was at that time—and possibly still continues to be—rather shrill, and as she got excited it would grow more accentuated, the colour would come to her still beautiful face, and her eyes would flash with excitement or soften into exquisite tenderness. Then, as at a vision in an enchanted mirror, her visitor would gaze at her in admiration ; but slowly the flush faded, the eyes lost their radiance, the hollows returned to the cheek, and the wrinkles became once more visible.

As I said before, the King, in the early days of his reign, relied on his mother's advice, seldom taking any step of importance without her sanction. During her visits to Belgrade, all State papers passed

through her hands, and she decided on every matter before the King even saw the documents. When she was away from Belgrade her secret agents reported daily all that went on. Foremost among these reporters, or "spies" they might be called, were the Simonevie husband and wife.

Simonevitch was a colonel in the army, and had a post about the Court, being Master of the Ceremonies. His wife, a very ordinary person, belonged to the clique of women to whom Milan had given the nickname, "the Queen's bodyguard." These ladies circled round Her Majesty, and when she left Belgrade and returned to Biarritz or Wiesbaden they kept her in touch with what went on in Belgrade. The Queen even in her absence was thus able to govern the country, and the King had merely to say "Amen." The ministerial annals of Servia are not very exhilarating reading, but here and there we come upon an incident, such as the "Women's Parliament," which would figure well in a farce. In truth, it has a true Gilbertian flavour and cannot be passed over. It was only natural and what was to be expected, seeing that Queen Natalie was "progressive" —although without knowing that such a word was in the dictionary—that she should gather round her women of highly intellectual capacity, one of these being Madame Novokovitch, whose husband was an able politician and occupied the important position

of Chief Minister. Novokovitch was, however, not what is called "a strong man," from the political point of view, and he was not equal to the situation which he filled, and would have been better placed in a university, for he had an elegant taste for the classics, and was more of a student than a politician. All the qualities, however, which were wanting in Novokovitch were present in his wife's character, who, as the wife of the Chief Minister, was at the head of society in Belgrade.

At Madame Novokovitch's house in Belgrade assembled not only the *fine fleur* of Belgrade society, but also all the clever men and women in the capital. The women predominated, and perhaps this caused a slight feeling of pique. But this is merely conjecture. Anyhow, these ladies being clever and progressive, finding that they received little masculine support, took a line of their own, and, under the patronage of the Queen, formed a "Women's Parliament," in which these clever politicians, who really had their work at heart, discussed certain social questions and proposed measures for the benefit of the depressed female race and for the advancement of each one's particular hobby. When these opinions had been discussed, certain resolutions were drawn up; the Bill, whatever it might be, was put to the vote, and, if passed, was sent to the Queen for her approval, and afterwards to the King for

his sanction. If this was given, the resolution became law, and was forwarded to Parliament.

This certainly was a high-handed proceeding, which would not find its parallel in other countries ; but so far as one can ascertain from the variety of statements, such subjects as taxes, or foreign policy, or the declaration of war, did not come within the sphere of the Women's Parliament ; it was more probably such matters as the rights of the wife and the subjugation of the husband, or the taxes which pressed on the housekeeper and such like. It must be clearly understood that the Bills passed by the female Parliament became actually *binding* as *law*, and therefore they had to receive the signature of the King.

Occasionally the Women's Parliament sent up certain resolutions which were not pleasing to the King, who would reject them. Then came a ministerial crisis and a general flutter among the women members of Parliament. The opposition, although headed by the King, was, however, generally beaten. Madame Novokovitch would send a special messenger with a despatch to the Queen, and after some vicissitudes and much talk the resolutions would be passed. The Queen-mother was equal to the occasion ; so was Madame Novokovitch.

Meantime the young King was growing more and more dreamy, and, curiously enough, whenever he

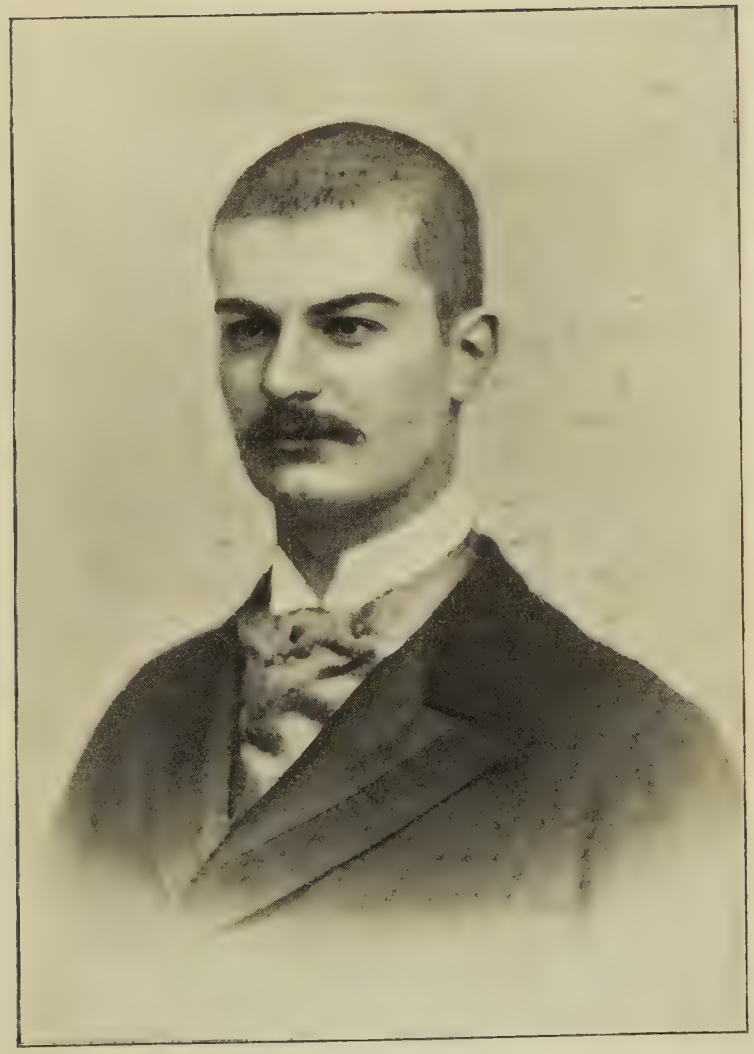
roused himself from his silent, absent ways and showed an active turn of mind, he was sent off to amuse himself at Homburg, Baden, Ems, or perhaps to pay a visit to some foreign Court. This was ostensibly to amuse him, but in reality to try and tempt him into matrimony. Queen Natalie's enemies accuse her of making use of these distractions, not so much for the purpose of finding a bride for her son, as in order to turn his mind from the more serious business of governing the country over which he was ruler, so that she might hold the reins in her own hand. According to these enemies of the Queen and the Novokie, husband and wife, the King was sent, like Cœlebs, in search of a wife. The marriage project was always in the air, but never seemed to come to the culminating point. There always was some difficulty; either the Princess was too young or too old, or some unsuitability turned up. King Milan, who thought the best thing he could do for his boy was to find him a good wife, wrote: "My choice falls either on a German princess or an Austrian archduchess; either of these are *born queens*, and such a wife would make Sacha what he should be." Then he goes on to discuss the different marriageable princesses who would be likely to accept his son. He would not listen to the idea of a Montenegrin princess, which was mooted when Minister Gruitch was in office. "It would only want

a Montenegrin or a Russian as Queen to upset everything ; it would be the death of the dynasty and the ruin of Sacha. If Sacha takes a wife from one of the East-European Courts, then we may say good-bye to the race of Obrenovitch."

On another occasion Milan writes to one of his most intimate friends, who knew every thought of his mind, that he despairs of getting Sacha married as he would wish. He discusses poor Sacha's weak points very freely, his opinion being that the failure of all the negotiations for getting the Crown Prince a wife were due, not to his want of sufficient quarterings, but to his delicate constitution and his plain appearance, which could not be got over. The King's photographs do not convey this impression. He is decidedly not handsome, but neither is he plain.

As a rule Alexander allowed himself to be offered about as if for sale, and was not affected by the refusals he received. Nikola Christitch had very nearly arranged for the Princess Hélène of Hesse, but that plan fell through. Novokovitch, who succeeded Christitch, made a bid for a Russian Princess, and King Milan made a definite proposal for the daughter of Archduke Joseph of Austria ; but in his wish to get connected with his best friend, he forgot that Austria would demand twelve royal quarterings, and Servia could not supply one. Queen Natalie naturally desired a connection with Russia,

but the House of Romanoff is as conservative as the Austrian, and there was no admittance without the quarterings ; so here was another failure. The marriage prospects of the King seemed hopeless unless he came down many steps of the ladder. Alexander grew impatient and suspicious : he fancied someone was slandering him. Suddenly he showed a desire to look into State affairs : this was not pleasant news either for the ministers or the Women's Parliament. The report, however, was unfounded. A new marriage project was now started which this time seemed likely to succeed. The chosen bride was Princess Marie of Greece, a lady already known to the King, who was charmed with her grace and beauty. He had met her at the Russian Court, and there had been some love passages. Matters were said to be arranged, and preparations for the wedding were already thought of. On the other hand, the Powers, especially Germany, were against the marriage, and the German Emperor Wilhelm expressed himself in a very decided manner ; such a marriage, he said, would be a miserable fiasco. Nevertheless, preparations were begun in Belgrade for the reception of the bride, and Queen Natalie removed from the Castle where she had been residing in order that alterations should be made and everything set in order for the King and Queen.



The latest Portrait of the late King Alexander.

page 286.

In a few days the following *communiquè* appeared in the Belgrade newspapers :—

"His Majesty King Alexander of Servia, according to present arrangements, will leave Belgrade on April 1st and travel incognito to the ancient convent Helendar, which is situated in the Athos Mountains, there to make a retreat. The King will remain at Helendar for the Easter festival ; later he will visit the Russian monastery Pantelemion, and on the 7th April the King will travel to Athens, where the betrothal of His Majesty to Princess Marie, the daughter of the King of Greece, will take place."

Those, however, who were behind the scenes knew that nothing was settled, and that it was more than foolish to allow the King to give himself away in this fashion. Likewise in all well-informed diplomatic circles it was well known that the Emperor of Germany had spoken in the most decided manner against the marriage, and was also convinced that the Servian Court as well as the Servian Government were on the eve of a terrible fiasco.

In spite of these discouraging reports, the King indulged in a roseate dream of coming happiness, in which he was encouraged by the Queen his mother and also by the ministers. At the suggestion of Minister Novokovitch a special messenger was despatched to Paris to select a wedding gift for Princess

Marie, which cost 29,000 francs, about £1,200 of our money. Not such a very magnificent gift; nevertheless, far too much for an impoverished country like Servia. This was to be presented by the King to his bride.

The King left for the Piræus feeling like a conqueror going on a triumphant progress. He had conquered fate at last, so he thought, poor fellow, as he set out on his journey to Athens. This time there was no doubt. He was going to be married, and no mistake. Alas! the irony of fate pursued him and once more played him a trick.

As the King, with the air of a victor, stepped on shore at the Piræus, he was met by a numerous cortège of members of the Greek diplomatic body. Amongst them was Markovitch Junior, the Servian Consul at Athens. He approached the King and whispered to him, "I have painful news for your Majesty. Princess Marie was yesterday betrothed to a Russian Grand Duke."

The feelings of the King can be imagined. It was not so much disappointed love as deep mortification which possessed him, and he frowned furiously upon those who he thought had led him into this trap—Novokovitch especially. To wreak his vengeance on him was his first thought; he sent a hasty telegram in cipher to Belgrade, dismissing Novokovitch and his Ministry. Queen Natalie,

however, used her influence to soothe her son, and the minister was not dismissed.

The King's reception at the Greek Court was most friendly. With the refined tact of an Athenian, King George glided over the marriage episode, affecting to see in the King's visit only a desire to keep up friendly relations. Nevertheless, at the State dinner, given in King Alexander's honour, neither Queen Olga nor Princess Marie appeared ; they were both indisposed. For the rest, the Servian papers now denied there had been any talk of a betrothal between the King and the Princess, saying that the King's visit to Athens was merely to testify his friendly feeling towards King George, and that the real object of his voyage was to see the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, who was then residing at Corfu. But when the King arrived at the island the result was the same as at Athens, the Empress refusing to receive him ; and after a day spent in admiring the scenery he had set sail once more. At Trieste the King again put into harbour. This time there was to be no disappointment, and a telegram was despatched to Vienna, suggesting a visit from the King of Servia to the Emperor. Francis Joseph, however, declined his visit. Although a tried friend of Milan, he was not friendly towards Alexander, whose late policy with regard to Austria had been, according to the Emperor's view, shifty and dangerous. He

was therefore not inclined to play host to the King.

After a day spent at Trieste, the King returned to Belgrade. The situation between the King and his ministers was still somewhat strained, Alexander resenting the negligence which led to the mortification he had suffered at the hands of the Greek Princess.

The Queen, meanwhile, had different plans in her head and had a new bride to present to the King's notice, this time a Russian, daughter to Prince Winsoff, with a large dowry and sufficient beauty. This marriage, however, like the others, fell through.

The King's return had been looked forward to with great anxiety, everyone expecting that he would take some action to check the scandalous excesses of his ministers and courtiers. Sacha, however, was strangely indifferent to everything. Melancholy seemed to have entered into his soul. He sat gloomily gazing at nothing, and the sound of his voice was rarely heard. King Milan, who had not been in Belgrade since the quarrel with Nikola Christitch, came this year to visit his son and see what could be done about raising money, for poor Milan, like Mr. Micawber, was always impecunious.

Three years had now passed since Milan had abdicated in favour of his son. He had during this

period leisure enough to make a study of Servia and the Servians, his studies being from the point of view of a private individual. With the vanity of the King we are already acquainted; it was a vanity born of the situation and fostered by injudicious treatment. Vain as he was, Milan nevertheless had a clear insight into matters of policy, and his observations are worth recording.

"His retrospect, he tells us, presents to him no subject for regret; his foreign policy was just and intelligent; his internal government was marked by the same sagacity, and if he had to go over his life again he would act on the same lines. One thing only he would alter. Servia and the Servians had taught him a lesson—to believe in no man's honesty, and to have confidence in no one, the Radicals least of all. Between them and the House of Obrenovitch no honest friendship could exist, and if Alexander should be so foolish as to give himself into their hands, so surely will he bring ruin and shame on himself and his race, and his name will be a by-word of scorn and contempt. When the last of the Obrenovie has been driven out, then the Radicals will rejoice and be at rest."

In this same year, 1894, King Alexander went to visit the German Emperor William at Berlin. This visit left many pleasant memories in the King's mind. A couple of years before he had been witness of the

sad life of the Russian Czar, shadowed as it was by the fear of secret assassins. He must have contrasted this pitiful life, from which all joy was taken away, with the happy confidence of the soldier-King, the well-beloved of his people. Alexander was amazed at the absence of ceremony in the intercourse between William and his people, especially the military, with whom he appeared to be almost on terms of easy equality. But under the velvet glove there is often an iron hand. For the rest the German Emperors make very free with their subjects; there is no such thing as ceremony. "Good morning, Majesty," is the usual salutation.

The young King returned to Belgrade a new man. He was confronted with another ministerial crisis, but he quietly sent for Nikola Christitch, and the man with the iron fist came back to the helm.

Nikola Christitch was now old and grey. He had served as a young officer under the Emperor Francis Joseph, and no doubt it was at the Emperor's suggestion that Christitch was recalled. His iron rule was perhaps the best for Servia at this moment. The throne needed a strong hand to support its authority, and every State office required a thorough cleansing. The political and party spirit had to be got rid of if Servia was to take her place among the nations. "It must be banished from the colleges, the judge's seat, and from the children's schools."

It was this task that fell to the lot of Nikola Christitch.[1]

This choice of Christitch was highly offensive to Milan, and caused a breach between father and son; at the same time there was no doubt that the young King had other motives for desiring to get his father away from Belgrade. Alexander was always in fear of the stronger mind and personality of his father, who, on his side, had much anxiety concerning the feeble condition of Sacha's health. For his mental weakness he had no feeling but contempt. "There is no dependence to be placed on Sacha," he writes to a friend. "He goes from one extreme to the other, and he is quite capable of pursuing with the same deadly hatred which he shows to the Radicals the very people he now pretends to like." Writing to another intimate friend, King Milan speaks in a more fatherly manner of his son's condition of health. "All would go well," he says, "if he only had a good wife; that would be the making of my boy." And then the King adds: "The Maschinka is running him to earth. Since this creature has got influence over him, Sacha is not recognisable. The terrible thing is that

[1] Artemesia Christitch had long since disappeared from Belgrade Society, where her place knew her no more; neither did Christitch, who had divorced her. It was said that after the royal separation had taken place she had made efforts to induce Milan to marry her, but he rejected all her proposals, and we hear no more of her. It has lately been stated that she has returned to Belgrade, and that her son, Obren, is to be put forward as future King.

the King will not give her up, and he has been hanging about her for the last three years. She is a clever woman, and plays the part of female enchantress to perfection." Then he goes on to say how he wished he could recall his folly in abdicating. "I may have made many mistakes, but in my time Servia was never in such a condition as at present. All my hopes for Sacha are disappointed, and the opinion I conceived of the men about him has proved to have been all wrong. I don't know what to believe."

The allusion made in this letter to the Maschinka introduces a new character on the Servian stage. Three years have passed since those contemptuous words were written, and who could have prophesied what those three years were to bring to Draga Maschin?—a Queen's crown and a violent death; such a death as rarely falls to a woman's lot.

We return to Milan, who left Belgrade in a huff, taking with him the furniture of his house, which was of great value. A violent correspondence followed between him and his son, who in a sense had banished his father.

This step did not prevent Milan still trying to get a Princess for Sacha. At last he imagined he had succeeded, as one of the smaller German Courts inclined towards the idea of an alliance with the King of Servia. Alexander could not, however, muster

courage to explain to his father his position with regard to Draga Maschin.

It has been said by different writers that about the time of Alexander's marriage two attempts were made on Milan's life: one of these being, it is stated, sanctioned by Alexander himself. Draga's influence may have been bad enough, but one can hardly believe the young King could have become so utterly demoralised as to attempt parricide. Be this as it may, the marriage of Alexander and Draga Maschin, which took place in 1900, and of which the story is told more in detail in the following chapter, was probably the cause of Milan's death.

Milan died at his house in Vienna, February 11, 1901. It is said nowadays that people don't die of broken heart; it is a disease that has gone out of fashion; it may come in again like appendicitis; it was more suited to the die-away period, when the women had bruised or broken hearts, long curls, and short frocks. Nevertheless, I have the authority of an eminent physician for the statement that many persons are brought to their death through the means of a sore, if not a broken, heart. This soreness cannot be cured by tonics or change of air; there is, in fact, no remedy in the pharmacy of the physician. So it was with Milan. Careless, selfish, extravagant, irreligious, degenerate Milan, a bad man in every sense of the

word, he still retained one faith—he believed in a good woman, such as Natalie. He had sinned heavily in regard to her ; he had sinned all round ; no excuse can be offered for him—he was a degenerate being ; but his degeneracy was not altogether his own fault. We look through the pages of his life-story and we follow his surroundings. We see the miserable childhood with a mother like Marie Catargo, and the still more contemptible Prince Kusa. Huet, the tutor, was not much better, and I have described what society in Belgrade was like. I ask, what was there in such a surrounding to elevate the mind or turn the soul towards the Almighty Creator ? There was one chance given to Milan ; he married a good woman. Natalie had faults in her youth, but her mind was noble, her aspirations were all after what was good. That plank of salvation Milan deliberately threw away. He trampled on her woman's feelings ; he wounded her self-respect ; he made her a spectacle to Europe ; finally, he tore from her her only consolation—her child : and yet at this moment I am confident Natalie forgives him, and prays for him as a good Christian should do. Let us do the same, and let us cast no stones at poor degenerate Milan. By his own desire King Milan was buried far away from Servia. His last resting place is in Austria, where the Emperor Francis Joseph, who had always been his friend, allotted him a suitable grave.

THE LATE QUEEN DRAGA.

page 296.

CHAPTER XI

THE recent terrible tragedy which has brought to a close the Obrenovitch dynasty has startled Europe and lent an interest to the unfortunate victims which otherwise they could not expect. Neither King Alexander nor Queen Draga were intellectually strong, nor worthy of the esteem of their subjects. The young King, indeed, at one period of his short life had given some promise of future distinction. This was at the time of the *coup d'état*, when, under Dokitsch's guidance, he acted with a firmness which gave promise for the future. But with the death of Dokitsch this promise failed of completion. His marriage with Madame Draga Maschin was a fatal step. A woman past her youth (she was only a few years younger than the King's mother[1]), with little to recommend her but her large dark eyes, Draga was not likely to keep the affections of her boy husband, who, it is said, as

[1] Draga's age was probably exaggerated, as was likely in the circumstances. But putting this aside, Draga was not a fitting wife for the King of Servia, either from the point of view of birth or of character.

time went on, bitterly repented the step he had taken.

Draga Maschin was the widow of a public official, and she had been left very poorly provided for. She was quite thirty when Queen Natalie took her into her service. It does not appear that she had any assigned position ; she was not lady-in-waiting, but she was apparently "generally useful," and being pleasant and agreeable was fairly well liked. Her duties were of a general character ; she occasionally attended the Queen in public, and likewise rendered certain services of a more menial order. For the rest, the Queen at this period appears to have made a friend and confidante of Madame Maschin.

Before this entrance into high life Madame Maschin had enjoyed a somewhat *risquè* reputation. That she should have been generally called "*the Maschin*" is a proof that she was on the delectable border, or fringe, of society, some unpleasant stories being whispered as to her early life and rather doubtful career.

There is little doubt that from the first she set herself to attract the attention of the young King, who, however, remained indifferent to her presence, and would probably have so continued, but for a lucky chance of which Draga availed herself. It was at Biarritz, in the year 1900, that Alexander came to visit his mother. One day, when bathing,

he got out of his depth. Draga, who, arrayed in a charming bathing costume, was standing on the bank watching the swimmers, saw the King's supposed danger and threw herself into the water, shrieking, "My beloved King is drowning!"

Needless to say, there was little chance of such a catastrophe, but it answered the lady's purpose, who, although she was well known to be a champion swimmer, managed on this occasion to be nearly drowned in her heroic efforts to save "her beloved King," and was carried senseless to her home. This caused quite a sensation, and the King's attention was naturally drawn to a woman who had given him such a proof of her devotion. He tendered his thanks in person, and on this occasion Draga, who pretended to be half unconscious, threw herself at the feet of her rescued Sovereign, and poured out a confession of her secret attachment to him. The King was touched, and from this time his downfall was assured. He had no chance against a woman whose experience of life and mental power gave her every advantage over a weak, vain, uneducated youth, who was like wax in the hands of a woman such as Draga, a past-mistress in every art which could enslave and attract. Before Alexander left Biarritz he had fallen completely under Draga's influence, seeing all things through her eyes, and being altogether guided by her judgment, the price

of his obedience to her wishes being the hope of making her his wife! Truly Draga was an astute woman!

In accordance with her directions the King's first task on returning to Belgrade was to dismiss the Ministry of Nikola Christitch, and to order his father to quit Servia. Milan was not clever enough to see the trap laid for him; rather he may be said to have walked blindly into it, for he fell into a fury with his son and left Belgrade in all haste. No sooner was he gone than Alexander wrote to invite his mother to Belgrade. This invitation was not prompted by filial affection, but by his passion for his mother's attendant. Milan, in his Memoirs, stigmatises this act of the young King's as an unworthy sacrifice of the interests of his country, as well as of the rights of his parents, to a contemptible passion, which could only exist in a degenerate nature. Weak natures are remarkable for their obstinate adherence to their own will; nothing short of banishing Madame Maschin would have interfered with her elevation. Alexander cared little or nothing for his father's opinion, and shortly proceeded to greater lengths. The Cabinet of Nikola Christitch having been dismissed, it was succeeded by the Cabinet *Novokovie*, presided over by Stojan Novokovitch and the women's parliament, this being arranged to please the Queen-mother,

for whom at this time of his life Alexander entertained all his childish adoration. To satisfy her he instigated his Ministers to drastic measures against Milan. Milan held the Novokovitch Cabinet and Natalie responsible for the reports to his detriment which were scattered broadcast, and considered that they encouraged the young King to insult his father. But before he died Milan knew this was not the case. It was Alexander himself, who, actuated by his passion for Draga, circulated these damaging stories against his father, for the purpose of keeping his mother in good humour, so that she might remain in Belgrade and that he might carry on his love affair with her lady-in-waiting. He was afraid that if he in any way irritated his mother she might, to annoy him, send Draga back to Biarritz, and so put an end to his love-making with the elderly companion who was now his promised bride ; for Draga had attained her ends, and had extracted from her boy lover a written promise of marriage, which was to take place on the earliest opportunity.

There are some who maintain that Queen Natalie was aware of the existence of this document, and that she not only agreed to it, but really desired the marriage. Inconceivable as it may appear that she could countenance such an alliance, which was in every way to be deplored, the cause assigned to her supposed

acquiescence is equally improbable. There is nothing in Natalie's former career which would allow anyone to suppose she would countenance such a union for the purpose of keeping a perpetual spy about her son. The mind which could conceive such a diabolical idea is not to be envied, and Natalie's devotion to Sacha, as well as her constant efforts to get him a suitable wife, are evidences that this story was one of those fabrications that are born of evil minds.

Natalie was undoubtedly blind to what was going on between her son and her companion ; but we are asked to believe the incredible story that the Queen desired a marriage in every respect disadvantageous to her only son in order that Draga should act the part of a spy and report to Natalie all political as well as other secrets. Natalie was especially anxious to get at the correspondence which almost daily took place between the King and his father Milan. The quarrel between the father and son had been adjusted. King Alexander, wishing to keep Milan in ignorance of his love affair with Draga, was now more than usually filial and more than usually generous in supplying his father. Both these circumstances should have excited the ex-King's suspicions, but do not seem to have done so. The constant interchange of letters between father and son was a source of disquiet to Queen Natalie, who did not know what was being

THE LATEST PORTRAIT OF THE LATE QUEEN DRAGA.

page 302.

plotted ; some new annoyance to herself, in all probability. We are told that she therefore desired above all things to know what passed between the ex-King and his son. That was natural, but it is hardly credible that the story circulated by Natalie's enemies is true.

According to this tale,[1] the Queen and Madame Draga Maschin, both wishing to know what was contained in the letters of King Milan to his son, determined that they would by some means get this correspondence into their hands. At this time both father and son had regained their old affectionate familiarity, and the interchange of letters was almost of daily habit. His father's letters were never shown by the young King to anyone about him. That his mother never saw them was not so surprising ; but his dearly beloved Draga was likewise kept out of this secret corner of his heart, and as she was not so firmly established as she became later, she dared not make a quarrel of the matter, nor, perhaps, did she attach quite so much importance to it as did Natalie, who had been always jealous of "Sacha's" affection for his father.

Queen Natalie arranged to give a *soirée dansante* to the fashionables of Belgrade, to which Madame Draga Maschin was also invited. While the King danced to his heart's content, Draga slipped quietly out of

[1] *Memoiren des Konig Milan*, 1892, Zurich.

the room and made her way to the King's study, where she took out of the drawers of his *secrétaire* the bundle of letters written to him by his father. It was a large packet, but she managed to conceal it about her person, and carried it to the Queen's house in safety. Whether the letters, when read, repaid the risk that was run in stealing them, we do not hear.

The friendship between the Queen and her lady-in-waiting came to the usual end of these intimacies. Natalie's eyes began to open to what was the real aim of the astute adventuress, and once her suspicions were aroused, she found ample evidence to show her they were well founded. She dismissed Madame Maschin, who, although apparently much distressed at leaving her beloved mistress, speedily found consolation in the attentions of the King. Soon all Belgrade were talking of the King's infatuation, and making bets on how long he would hold out against Draga's determination to be his wife. As a matter of fact, Alexander held out for two years, during which time Draga made use of every device to win him to her purpose. The proverb "Ce que femme veut" came true for the millionth time, and Alexander gave way to the prayers and entreaties of the lady. No one, however, who has known the circumstances intimately, denies the charm possessed by Draga, which was more mental than personal. She

was undoubtedly a clever woman, and her cleverness was not hampered by many scruples. She had determined to be Queen of Servia, and she carried her point regardless of all obstacles.

It was in the summer of 1900 that King Alexander married Madame Draga Maschin. The pair took advantage of King Milan's going to Carlsbad to get united. The news of what was a great misfortune for the Royal House of Obrenovitch was brought to King Milan by an intimate friend, who gives the following account of the scene that took place :—

"I was forcibly reminded of an epoch in Milan's life some years ago, when I visited the King in Paris and found him plunged in the uttermost dejection. His face wore the same expression now as it did on that evening, eight years ago. Misery, despair, and hopeless dejection were written on his face then, and were reproduced now. The first words he said were, 'It is fearful—terrible! Who can understand it? Who could have conceived it? The Servians are a contemptible lot if they accept that creature for their Queen.'

"I pointed out to the King that he should at once go to Belgrade and put an end to this tragi-comedy. I knew that Alexander would not dare to resist his father's will when once Milan's eye was on him. Instead of answering me, Milan handed me a

telegram which, as well as I remember, came from Semlin. It was sent by a confidential agent and communicated to Milan that King Alexander had personally given the orders to the Minister of the Interior and the Military Commandant in Belgrade to refuse to allow his father to cross the Servian frontier. If he arrived in Belgrade, he was to be immediately placed under arrest and to be escorted out of the country. If he refused to go, the troops had orders to enforce the King's command, and, if necessary, to make use of their firearms to compel obedience on the part of the ex-King.

"As I handed back the paper to the King my face told what I thought. Milan brought his hand down on the table with such force that every article on it vibrated.

"'And this is the act of Sacha—of my own son! He is a monster—a thing of evil in the eyes of all men! I have known always that, should he fall into the hands of a bad woman, all was lost. What was left undone by the Ministers and the Regency has been completed by the Maschin. Sacha will be her mouthpiece: she will command, he will obey. The Maschin will be Queen of Servia. What a reproach! What an evil! The dynasty is for ever disgraced; the Montenegrins and Peter Karageorgovitch will dance for joy; their game is played for them; it is all over with the Obrenovie. Peter

St. Mark's Church, Belgrade, the Burial Place of the Obrenovitch Family.

page 306.

Karageorgovitch will sit on the throne of Servia; he has only to wait for my death and that of Sacha. The dream of a future successor is at end; Sacha is the last of the Obrenovie. It is fearful! it is the end of all things!'

"Milan was silent for a few minutes; then he burst out wildly, passionately:—

"'A creature like her! a sordid creature! Could he not have put aside his love for this low-born woman? But I never could make the fool understand that a King has duties; he has something else to think of but love-making.'

"Milan added that Ristisch had always maintained from the time of the *coup d'état* of 1894 that the young King was past-master in deception. 'Not one word of truth comes from the lips of this deceitful youth, who one day will work mischief to Servia.'"

One must look upon this forecast of Ristisch as the outburst of an angry man who had been overreached by his own pupil. For the rest, the *coup d'état* was planned by Dokitsch, and was justifiable from every point of view.

In taking leave of his friend, we are told that the ex-King, with tears in eyes, said, "I shall never see Servia again, neither in life nor in death. My experience has been a bitter one—everywhere treachery and deceit; and now my own son—that has broken

my heart. From this moment Servia, so far as I am in question, has no existence."

Alexander may have thought, and probably did think, that this marriage with "one of the people" (as he said in his speech announcing the event) would have recommended itself to the nation of swineherds. He himself was weary of being perpetually offered to Princesses and meeting rebuffs, and all the circumstances seemed to make for the marriage. It has already been told what deep mortification the news inflicted upon both Milan and Natalie. From that time the Queen-mother despaired of the future both of her son and of Servia; and yet Alexander deserved much more pity for his unfortunate marriage than it was his lot to receive. This marriage was his social ruin. "Nothing," says a recent writer, "would have saved the situation but a reception at the Court of St. Petersburg." The Czar had sent a warm telegram of congratulation on the marriage—but receive the bride at the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg! No, that was beyond him. So Draga had to stay in Belgrade and Alexander had to swallow his mortification. There was nobody now to suggest some new outlet for his thoughts, as the women's parliament had ceased to exist when the Queen-mother left Belgrade. Suddenly Alexander bethought himself of his old game of surprising the nation with a new constitution.

When the Queen-mother left Belgrade, Queen Draga took her place; but the people did not cluster round her as they had done round Natalie, and Draga's whole mien betrayed her anger and resentment. Draga was not a wise woman, although she was a clever one, and she chose an untoward moment to put forward her brother, Lieutenant Lunjowitza, as heir apparent to the throne. This audacity raised a storm; both the King and Draga were publicly hissed, and their unpopularity increased every day.

This was not the time to proclaim a new constitution, the third Alexander had given to the nation during his short reign. It was an act of folly. Alas! he had no adviser now, like Dokitsch, to guide him in the way he should walk; he had only Draga and her family, and when they heard his intention, they applauded him, and the new *coup d'état* took place. This unfortunate decision was, no doubt, the immediate cause of the ghastly deed perpetrated at the Castle of Belgrade on the night of the 11th of June last. On that night the House of Obrenovitch ended. We look back with keen interest and not without a certain sympathy on the short history of the dynasty, which began with the grand figure of old Milosch, and ended so piteously with "Sacha," his mother's darling.

For that poor lady there can remain only a feeling of the most profound compassion. We think of her

in her youth and beauty, with her wayward spirit, her courage, her broken life, and now haunted by the memory of this dark tragedy. It is like some terrible dream from which we awake with that indescribable horror born of nightmare ; but alas ! here all is fearful, gruesome reality. All we can do is to offer an humble prayer to Him who has chastised, that He may in His mercy grant peace to the stricken Queen.

THE END

INDEX

A

Alexander, King of Servia: birth, 83; quits the country with his mother, 155; his early education, 156; his life abroad, 157–62; suggested return, 162–4, 172–7; return effected, 178; Milan abdicates in his favour, 198; Regents appointed, 198; his nineteenth year, 247; attachment to his tutor, 247; his education, 247; his manner, 248; foreign tour, 248; meets his father, 249; determines to end the Regency, 250; acquaints his father, 250; hampered by Radical party, 251; Liberal Cabinet appointed, 251; advice of Dokitsch, 252; Natalie informed, 253; determines the Regency, 254–9; troops swear allegiance, 259; Coalition Government, 260; general rejoicings, 260; illness and death of Dokitsch, 261; administrative changes, 262–4; appeals to Milan for help, 262; conspiracies against him, 265; withdraws Constitution of 1888 and restores that of 1869, 266, 267; effect on the nation, 268; his lonely childhood, 274, 275, 276; tool of the Radicals, 276; the Court at Belgrade, 278–80; guided by Natalie, 280; matrimonial projects, 284–90; visit to Emperor William of Germany, 291; summons Christitch to power, 292; relations with Draga Maschin, 294, 295; marriage, 295–305; Draga's influence, 299, 300; banishment of Milan, 300; social ruin, 308; unpopularity, 309; new Constitution proclaimed, 309; assassination, 309

— Karageorgovitch: elected Prince, 21; exiled, 22; complicity in murder of Michael, 31, 33, 34

— of Battenburg: Prince of Bulgaria, 112; his character and policy, 113, 114; head of the national movement, 115; proclaimed Prince, 115; dethronement mentioned, 152

Artemesia, Madame Christitch: influence on Milan, 140; his evil genius, 141; aspires to the throne, 142; hated by populace, 144; alliance with her intended, 178; disappearance, 293

B

Belgrade: its position and history, 68–74; the palace, 71; the Konak, 73; the racecourse, 87; demoralised condition of society, 87–90; methods of Post Office officials, 90

Beli-Markovitch: Regent, 198; Regency ends, 258

Berlin, Congress of: settlements arrived at, 106–8

Besnie, Minister of Education, 261

Bogecivitch, General, 258

Bulgaria: rivalry with Servia, 110; insurrection, 111–12; Alexander of Battenburg elected Prince, 112; throws off yoke of Russia, 114; joins Roumania against Turkey, 114; jealousy of Servia, 116; war with Servia, 122; victory over Servia, 127; superiority of Bulgarian army, 127; intervention of the Powers, 127; treaty of peace, 128, 131, 132

C

Capestran, Johann, 74

Christitch, Nikola: influence on Milan, 140-5; letter to Natalie, 169; intervenes in divorce proceedings, 188; his tyrannous régime, 197; summoned to power, 292

—, Madame. *See* Artemesia

D

Dechant, King, 1

Dokitsch, Dr.: tutor to King Alexander, 212, 247; advice to Alexander, 250, 252; takes part in *coup d'état*, 254-9; head of Coalition Government, 260; illness and death, 261

Draga, Queen: known as the Maschinka, 293, 298; marriage with Alexander, 295, 305; her previous history, 298; attempts to attract Alexander, 298, 299; tale of stolen letter, 303; rupture with Natalie, 304; her brother suggested as heir-apparent, 309; assassination, 309

E

England, dissatisfaction with treaty of San Stefano, 106

G

Garaschanin, Milutin: Pretender to the throne, 31, 32; influence on Milan, 118; decline of his popularity, 140; leader of the "party of progress," 148; his oratory, 148; his policy, 149; joins Radicals, 193; complicity in the Knitschanin-Markovitch affair, 194–7; reconciliation with Milan, 263

Gjaja, Jovan, 151, 234

Glawni Odbor, the, 151, 152, 154, 271, 272, 277

Gredelitza, 103

Gruitch, Sava: ruled by Pastisch, 150-2; his policy, 270

H

Huet, Milan's tutor, 38

Hunjadi, Count, 233

K

Kara George: leader of rebellion against Turkey, 9; elected com-

mander, 9; voluntary exile, 12; return to Servia and death, 18
Knitschanin, Hélène, 194, 197
Konstantinovitch, Alexander: attachment to Natalie, 55–8; position at Court, 85

L

Lunjowitza, Lieutenant, 311

M

Marie Catargo, mother of Milan: her life at Bukarest, 36; dislike of her son, 36; visits Milan in Paris, 48; attends his wedding, 63
—, Princess of Greece, 286
Markovitch, Hélène, 194, 196
Michael, Prince, succeeds his father, 24; faith in the Servians, 25; various reforms, 25; rival pretenders, 26; assassination, 29
—, Metropolitan of Servia, 152; return after banishment, 214; letter from Natalie, 215, 216
Milan, King of Servia: childhood, 27; his upbringing, 36; summoned to Belgrade, 37; education, 38–40; proclaimed Prince, 42; Coronation, 43; Regency appointed, 43; his popularity, 44; conspiracy against him, 45; declared "of age," 46; foreign tour, 46; interview with his mother, 48; matrimonial projects, 50; engagement and marriage to Natalie, 58–64; warned of unhappiness, 61; Russian intrigue, 65; early happiness, 65, 66, 75; evil influence of his training, 76–9; financial embarrassments, 79, 80; his extravagance, 81; disappointment at his wife's dowry, 82; birth of an heir, 83; quarrels with Natalie, 84–7; struggle with the Radical party, 93–5; resists policy of Nicholas, 96; joins Montenegro against Turkey, 97; peace concluded, 97; proclamation of war with Turkey, 99; brilliant successes, 99–102; capture of Nish, 102; of Gredelitza, 103; loyal aid of Ristisch, 95, 107; proclaimed King, 108; recognition by the Powers, 108; diplomatic agents appointed, 108; treaties arranged, 109; Halcyon period of his reign, 109; various reforms, 109; his policy in relation to Bulgaria, 116; reluctance to declare war, 120, 121; war declared, 122; forced to cease hostilities by the Powers, 125; his defective military training, 126, 128, 129; loyalty of the people, 130; popularity waning, 133; domestic unhappiness, 133; influence of Christitch and his wife, 140–5; renewed quarrels with Natalie, 144, 145; gambling, 147; accepts Garaschanin's programme, 149; extravagance, 149; plot for Natalie to supersede him, 153, 154; further scandals, 154; decides on divorce, 155; agreement to separate, 155, 156; correspondence with Natalie, 157–62; prevents her return, 164; resolves on divorce, 167; de-

termined to separate Natalie and her son, 171; envoy sent to bring back Crown Prince, 172; resulting events, 173–8; his conduct condemned, 178; divorce proceedings begun, 179–81; his infatuation for Madame Christitch, 179; reasons for divorce, 181–7; divorce pronounced, 188, 189; radical plots against him, 190–2; his speculations, 193; attempt on his life, 194; the Knitschanin-Markovitch affair, 194–7; abdication and appointment of Regency, 198; motives for resignation, 199, 200; provision made for him, 200; retires to Paris, 202; financial embarrassments, 203, 208, 209; tales of extravagance, 204; his character, 206, 207; summoned to Servia, 210; signs binding deed of abdication, 210; hatred of his subjects, 211; formal renouncement of all claims to throne, etc., 246; upholds Alexander's policy, 252; visit to Natalie, 253; visit to Alexander, 262; reconciliation with Garaschanin, 263; effect of abdication upon Alexander, 274; his opinions of his son, 277; breach with Alexander, 293; attempt on his life, 295; death, 295; his character analysed, 296; banishment, 300; his dejection at Alexander's marriage, 305; prophecy of disaster, 307

Milan, son of Prince Milosch: reigns for a few months, 21; death, 24

Milosch Obrenovitch, 10; succeeds Kara George, 11; victory over Turkey, 15, 16; difference with Kara George, 18; recognised as Prince and ruler, 19; abdication, 19; return to power, 22, 23; his character and death, 23, 24

N

Natalie, Queen of Servia: her station and descent, 51–3; beauty, 54; qualities, 55; courted by Konstantinovitch, 55–8; meeting with Milan, 58; engagement and marriage, 59–64; early happiness, 65, 66, 75; encounter with Ila Marienküsch at Belgrade, 67, 68; her dowry, 81; birth of a son, 83; quarrels with Milan, 84–7; deprecates war with Bulgaria, 119, 120; compared with Empress Eugénie, 66, 119; nursing the wounded, 130; domestic unhappiness, 133; gipsy's warning, 134, 135; deficient in tact, 136; Russian influence, 137; scandal at Easter reception, 138; desire to be made Regent, 138; threat of divorce, 142; renewed scandals, 144, 145; plot for her to supersede Milan, 153, 154; constant quarrels, 154; arrangement to quit Servia, 155; agreement to separate, 155, 156; leaves Servia, 156; correspondence with Milan, 157–62; decision to return to Servia, 163, 166; Milan resolves on divorce, 167; her bitter feeling against him, 167, 168; appeals to Christitch,

168; her false position, 170; popularity at Wiesbaden, 170, 171; appeal to Emperor William, 171; withstands Milan's desire for the Crown Prince's return, 172–5; determined attitude, 176, 177; forced to give in, 178; protests against divorce, 185-7; divorce pronounced, 188, 189; wish to return, 193; determination to settle in Servia, 209; her correspondence with Russia, 212; her demeanour after Milan's abdication, 213; her desire to join her son, 215, 216; return to Servia, 217–20; injudicious advice to Alexander, 221, 222; her visit unsuccessful, 223; efforts to annul divorce, 224, 225; efforts to win popularity, 226; desire to regain friendship of Russia, 226–8; reproof by Ristisch, 228–32; Skupshtina decide on her banishment, 232; she objects, 233; her expulsion determined upon and carried out, 235, 236; incidents en route, 238–42; arrival at Semlin, 243; proceeds to Roumania, 244; exciting scenes, 245; formal decree of banishment, 246; informed of Alexander's policy by Milan, 253; her objection to Alexander's training, 276; her appearance in later life, 280; influence over Alexander, 280; her attitude towards Alexander's marriage, 302, 308; her piteous position, 310

Nicholas, Prince of Montenegro: his policy in the Balkans, 95, 96

Nisch, 102

Novokovitch, 282–3

P

Pastisch, leader of the Radicals, 150; his despotism, 150; interview with Natalie, 234; flight, 268; his policy, 271, 272

Peter Karageorgovitch, Prince: conspiracy against Alexander, 265, 266; insists on his claim to the throne, 276

Protitsch, Regent, 198, death of, 249, 273; his loyalty, 273

R

Ristisch, Jovan: secures inheritance for Milan, 34; Regent, 44, 45; distrusted by Milan, 78; his policy, 95, 271; at Congress of Berlin, 107; retirement, 149; Regent during Alexander's minority, 198; reproves Natalie, 228–32; accompanies Alexander to Russia, etc., 248; end of Regency, 258; desire for peace, 264

Roumania, insurrection, 111, 112; Russia's policy, 112; Aliko Pasha made Governor, 112

Rudolph, Crown Prince of Austria: friendship with Milan, 143

Russia, war with Turkey, 98; diplomacy at San Stefano, 104; policy in Roumania, 112

S

San Stefano, Treaty of, 104; occasions general discontent, 106

Servia: historical survey, 1; under Stephan Duchan, 2–5; reduced to vassalage under Turkey, 5; schemes for independence, 8; under Kara George, 8; partial independence, 10, 11; withdrawal of Kara George, 12; administration of Milosch Obrenovitch, 11 *et seq.*; victory over Turkey, 16; internal quarrels, 17; Milosch recognised ruler, 19; Milosch abdicates, 19; Alexander Karageorgovitch elected Prince, 21; Milosch returns, 22; Michael succeeds Milosch, 24; his administration, 25; assassination, 29; Milan proclaimed Prince, 42; demoralised condition of Servian society, 87–90; methods of Post Office officials, 90; aims of the Radical party, 93, 94; rising in the Balkans, 96, 97; campaign against Turkey, 97; ally of Russia in war with Turkey, 99; successful campaign, 99, 104; severance of bond with Turkey, 104; Treaty of San Stefano, 104, 105; declared independent by Congress of Berlin, 107; Milan proclaimed King, 108; war with Bulgaria mooted, 110; jealousy of Bulgaria, 116; claims equal rights with Bulgaria, 116; war declared, 122; defeat at Slivnitza, 124; intervention of the Powers, 127; treaty of peace, 128, 131, 132; unrest after the war, 132; rise of the "party of progress," 148; influence of the Radical party, 150; stern rule of Christitch, 197; abdication of Milan, 198; Alexander succeeds, 198; Regents appointed, 198; Alexander's *coup d'état*, 254; Constitution of 1869 restored, 266; *resumé* of Servian politics, 269

Simie: forms Cabinet and retires, 264

Skupshtina, or National Assembly: first meeting, 11; declares for war, 96, 121; decision regarding Milan and Natalie, 232; scandalous scenes, 264

Slivnitza, battle of, 124

Stanovitch, Aga, 151

Stephan Dushan, King, 1; his policy and ambitions, 2–5; battle at Belgrade, 73; his kingdom, 270

T

Todleben, concessions after Treaty of San Stefano, 106

Tomie, Lieutenant: murdered, 89

Turkey: war with Russia and allies, 98; loses vassalage over Servia, 104; protests against Russia's interference in Roumania, 112

W

Wasseljevitch, Dimitri: political refugee, 85, 86; sent as delegate to Natalie, 213, 214

Women's Parliament, 282, 283, 300

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